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ΘΕΟΛΟΓΙΑ ἙΚΔΕΚΤΙΚΗ.

A

DISCOURSE

OF

THE LIBERTY OF PROPHESYING,

WITH ITS

Just Limits and Temper.

SHEWING

THE UNREASONABLENESS OF PRESCRIBING TO OTHER MEN'S FAITH,
AND THE INIQUITY OF PERSECUTING DIFFERING OPINIONS.

BY JEREMY TAYLOR, D. D.

*Chaplain in Ordinary to King ^{II} Charles I. and Lord Bishop of
Down, Connor, and Dromore.*

A New Edition.

Δύνασθε γὰρ καθ' ἓνα πάντες προφητεύειν.

1 Cor. xiv. 31.

For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all
may be comforted.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

In preparing the following Edition of the Liberty of Prophesying for the Press, it has been judged expedient to omit the very long Dedication of the Work to LORD CHRISTOPHER HATTON, (as merely recapitulating its principal arguments) and to place the elaborate addition to Section Eighteen, on the Case of the Anabaptists, at the end of the Volume. The Reader will thus receive this most powerful Writer's Statement of the Question of Infant Baptism in the way he gave it to the World—first in the shape here given, without the Appendix; and then with that important addition.

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ΘΕΟΛΟΓΙΑ 'ΕΚΛΕΚΤΙΚΗ.

OF

THE LIBERTY

OF

PROPHESYING.

THE infinite variety of opinions in matters of religion, as they have troubled Christendom, with interests, factions, and partialities ; so have they caused great divisions of the heart, and variety of thoughts and designs amongst pious and prudent men. For they all, seeing the inconveniences which the disunion of persuasions and opinions have produced directly or accidentally, have thought themselves obliged to stop this inundation of mischiefs, and have made attempts accordingly. But it hath happened to most of them as to a mistaken physician, who gives excellent physic but misapplies it, and so misses of his cure ; so have these men, their attempts have therefore been ineffectual ; for they put their help to a wrong part, or they have endeavoured to cure the symptoms, and have let the disease alone till it seemed incurable. Some

have endeavoured to re-unite these factions by propounding such a guide which they were all bound to follow; hoping that the unity of a guide, would have persuaded unity of minds; but who this guide should be at last became such a question, that it was made part of the fire that was to be quenched; so far was it from extinguishing any part of the flame. Others thought of a rule, and this must be the means of union, or nothing could do it. But supposing all the world had been agreed of this rule, yet the interpretation of it was so full of variety, that this also became part of the disease, for which the cure was pretended. All men resolved upon this, that though they yet had not hit upon the right, yet some way must be thought upon to reconcile differences in opinion; thinking so long as this variety should last, Christ's kingdom was not advanced, and the work of the Gospel went on but slowly; few men in the mean time considered, that so long as men had such variety of principles, such several constitutions, educations, tempers, and distempers, hopes, interests, and weaknesses, degrees of light, and degrees of understanding, it was impossible all should be of one mind. And what is impossible to be done, is not necessary it should be done; and therefore, although variety of opinions was impossible to be cured (and they who attempted it, did like him who claps his shoulder to the ground to stop an earthquake) yet the inconveniences arising from it might possibly be cured, not by uniting their beliefs, that was to be despaired of, but by curing that which caused these mischiefs and accidental inconveniences of their disagreements. For although these inconveniences which every

man sees and feels were consequent to this diversity of persuasions, yet it was but accidentally and by chance; inasmuch as we see that in many things, and they of great concernment, men allow to themselves and to each other a liberty of disagreeing, and no hurt neither. And certainly if diversity of opinions, were of itself the cause of mischiefs it would be so ever, that is, regularly and universally (but that we see it is not;) for there are disputes in Christendom concerning matters of greater concernment than most of those opinions that distinguish sects, and make factions; and yet because men are permitted to differ in those great matters, such evils are not consequent to such differences, as are to the uncharitable managing of smaller and more inconsiderable questions. It is of greater consequence to believe right in the question of the validity or invalidity of a death-bed repentance, then to believe aright in the question of purgatory, and the consequences of the doctrine of predetermination, are of deeper and more material consideration than the products of the belief of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of private masses; and yet these great-concernments where a Liberty of Propheying in these questions hath been permitted, hath made no distinct communion, no sects of Christians, and the others have, and so have these too in those places where they have peremptorily been determined on either side. Since then if men are quiet and charitable in some disagreeings, that then and there the inconvenience ceases, if they were so in all others where lawfully they might, (and they may in most) Christendom should be no longer rent in pieces, but would be reintegrated in a new Pen-

tecost ; and although the Spirit of God did rest upon us in divided tongues, yet so long as those tongues were of fire not to kindle strife, but to warm our affections, and inflame our charities, we should find that this variety of opinions in several persons would be looked upon as an argument only of diversity of operations, while the Spirit is the same ; and that another man believes not so well as I, is only an argument that I have a better and a clearer illumination than he ; that I have a better gift than he, received a special grace and favour, and excel him in this, and am perhaps excelled by him in many more. And if we all impartially endeavour to find a truth, since this endeavour and search only is in our power, (that we shall find it being *ab extra*, a gift and an assistance extrinsical) I can see no reason why this pious endeavour to find out truth shall not be of more force to unite us in the bonds of charity, then the misery in missing it shall be to dis-unite us. So that since a union of persuasion is impossible to be attained, if we would attempt the cure by such remedies as are apt to enkindle and encrease charity, I am confident we might see a blessed peace would be the reward and crown of such endeavours.

But men are now adays, and indeed always have been, since the expiration of the first blessed ages of Christianity, so in love with their own fancies and opinions, as to think faith and all Christendom is concerned in their support and maintenance, and whoever is not so fond and does not dandle them like themselves, it grows up to a quarrel, which because it is in *materia theologica*, or relates to theology, is made a quarrel in religion, and God is entitled to it ; and then

if you are once thought an enemy to God, it is our duty to persecute you even to death; we do God good service in it; when if we should examine the matter rightly, the question is either in *materia non revelata*, or *minus evidenti*, or *non necessaria*, either it is not revealed, or not so clearly, but that wise and honest men may be of different minds, or else it is not of the foundation of faith, but a remote superstructure, or else of mere speculation, or perhaps when all comes to all, it is a false opinion, or a matter of human interest, that we have so zealously contended for; for to one of these heads most of the disputes of Christendom may be reduced; so that I believe the present fractions, (or the most) are from the same cause which St. Paul observed in the *Corinthian* schism, *When there are divisions among you, are ye not carnal?*† It is not the differing opinions, that is the cause of the present ruptures, but want of charity; it is not the variety of understandings, but the dis-union of wills and affections; it is not the several principles, but the several ends that cause our miseries; our opinions commence, and are upheld according as our turns are served and our interests are preserved, and there is no cure for us, but piety and charity. A holy life will make our belief holy, if we consult not humanity and its imperfections in the choice of our religion, but search for truth without designs, save only of acquiring heaven, and then be as careful to preserve charity, as we were to get a point of faith; I am much persuaded we should find out more truths by this means; or however, (which is the main of all) we shall be secured

though we miss them ; and then we are well enough.

For if it be evinced that one heaven shall hold men of several opinions, if the unity of faith be not destroyed by that which men call differing religions, and if an unity of charity be the duty of us all, even towards persons that are not persuaded of every proposition we believe, then I would fain know to what purpose are all those stirs, and great noises in Christendom ; those names of faction, the several names of churches not distinguished by the division of kingdoms, as the church obeys the government, *ut Ecclesiæ sequatur Imperium*, which was the primitive rule * and canon, but distinguished by name of sects and men ? These are all become instruments of hatred, thence come schisms and parting of communions, and then persecutions, and then wars and rebellion, and then the dissolutions of all friendships and societies. All these mischiefs proceed not from this, that all men are not of one mind, for that is neither necessary nor possible, but that every opinion is made an article of faith, every article is a ground of a quarrel, every quarrel makes a faction, every faction is zealous, and all zeal pretends for God, and whatsoever is for God cannot be too much ; we by this time are come to that pass, we think we love not God except we hate our brother, and we have not the virtue of religion, unless we persecute all religions but our own ; for lukewarmness is so odious to God and man, that we proceeding furiously upon these mistakes, by

* Optat. lib. 3.

supposing we preserve the body, we destroy the soul of religion, or by being zealous for faith, or which is all one, for that which we mistake for faith, we are cold in charity, and so lose the reward of both.

All these errors and mischiefs must be discovered and cured, and that is the purpose of this discourse.

SECTION I.

Of the nature of faith, and that its duty is completed in believing the Articles of the Apostles' Creed.

FIRST, then, it is of great concernment to know the nature and integrity of faith; for there begins our first and great mistake; for faith although it be of great excellency, yet when it is taken for a habit intellectual, it hath so little room and so narrow a capacity, that it cannot lodge thousands of those opinions which pretend to be of her family.

For although it be necessary for us to believe whatsoever we know to be revealed of God; and so every man does, that believes there is a God; yet it is not necessary, concerning many things, to know that God hath revealed them; that is, we may be ignorant of, or doubt concerning the propositions, and indifferently maintain either part, when the question is not concerning God's veracity, but whether God hath said so or

no; that which is of the foundation of faith, that only is necessary; and the knowing or not knowing of that, the believing or disbelieving it, is that only which, as to the nature of the things to be believed, is in immediate and necessary order to salvation or damnation.

Now all the reason and demonstration of the world convinces us, that this foundation of faith, or the great adequate object of the faith that saves us, is that great mysteriousness of Christianity which Christ taught with so much diligence, for the credibility of which he wrought so many miracles; for the testimony of which the Apostles endured persecutions; that which was a folly to the Gentiles, and a scandal to the Jews, this is that which is the object of a Christian's faith: all other things are implicitly in the belief of the articles of God's veracity, and are not necessary in respect of the constitution of faith to be drawn out, but may there lie in the bowels of the great articles without danger to any thing or any person, unless some other accident or circumstance makes them necessary: now the great object which I speak of, is *"Jesus Christ crucified."* *I have determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified;* so said St. Paul to the church of Corinth: this is the article upon the confession of which Christ built his church, viz. only upon St. Peter's creed, which was no more but this simple enunciation, *"We believe and are sure that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God:"* and to this salvation particularly is promised, as in the case of Martha's creed, John 11. 27. To this the Scripture gives

the greatest testimony, and to all them that confess it; *"For every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and Who ever confesseth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God;"* * the believing this article is the end of writing the four gospels: *"For all these things are written, that ye might believe, that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God,"* † and then that this is sufficient follows, *"and that believing,"* viz. this article (for this was only instanced in) *"ye might have life through his name,"* this is that great Article, which as to the nature of the things to be believed, is sufficient disposition to prepare a *catechumen* to baptism, as appears in the case of the *Ethiopian* Eunuch, whose creed was only this, *"I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God,"* and upon this confession, (saith the story) they both went into the water, and the *Ethiop* was washed, and became as white as snow.

In these particular instances, there is no variety of Articles, save only that in the annexes of the several expressions, such things are expressed, as besides that Christ is come, they tell from whence, and to what purpose; and whatsoever is expressed, or is to these purposes implied, is made articulate and explicate, in the short and admirable mysterious creed of St. Paul, Rom. 10. 8. *"This is the word of faith which we preach, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved:"* this is the great and intire complexion of a Christian's faith, and since salvation is promised

* John iv. 2. 15.

† John xx. 31.

to the belief of this creed, either a snare is laid for us, with a purpose to deceive us, or else nothing is of prime and original necessity to be believed, but this *Jesus Christ our Redeemer* ; and all that which is the necessary parts, means, or main actions of working this redemption for us, and the honour for him, is in the bowels and fold of the great Article, and claims an explicit belief by the same reason, that binds us to the belief of its first complexion, without which neither the thing could be acted, nor the proposition understood.

For the act of believing propositions, is not for itself, but in order to certain ends ; as sermons are to good life and obedience ; for (excepting that it acknowledges God's veracity, and so is a direct act of religion) believing a revealed proposition, hath no excellency in itself, but in order to that end for which we are instructed in such revelations. Now God's great purpose being to bring us to him by Jesus Christ, Christ is our medium to God, obedience is the medium to Christ, and faith the medium to obedience, and therefore is to have its estimate in proportion to its proper end, and those things are necessary, which necessarily promote the end, without which obedience cannot be encouraged or prudently enjoined ; so that those Articles are necessary, that is, those are fundamental points, upon which we build our obedience ; and as the influence of the Article is to the persuasion or engagement of obedience, so they have their degrees of necessity. ¶ Now all that Christ, when he preached, taught us to believe, and all that the Apostles in their sermons propound, all aim at this, that we should acknowledge Christ for our Law-giver and our

Saviour; so that nothing can be necessary by a prime necessity to be believed explicitly, but such things which are therefore parts of the great Article, because they either encourage our services, or oblige them, such as declare Christ's greatness in himself, or his goodness to us; so that although we must neither deny nor doubt of any thing, which we know our great Master hath taught us; yet salvation is in special and by name annexed to the belief of those Articles only, which have in them the indearments of our services, or the support of our confidence, or the satisfaction of our hopes, such as are; Jesus Christ the Son of the living God, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, forgiveness of sins by his blood, resurrection of the dead, and life eternal; because these propositions qualify Christ for our Saviour and our Law-giver, the one to engage our services, the other to endear them; for so much is necessary as will make us to be his servants, and his disciples; and what can be required more? This only. Salvation is promised to the explicit belief of those Articles, and therefore those only are necessary, and those are sufficient; but thus, to us in the formality of Christians, which is a formality super-added to a former capacity, we before we are Christians are reasonable creatures, and capable of a blessed eternity, and there is a creed which is the Gentiles' creed, which is so supposed in the Christian creed, as it is supposed in a Christian to be a man, and that is, *he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*[†]

If any man will urge farther, that whatsoever is deducible from these Articles by necessary consequence, is necessary to be believed explicitly:

I answer, It is true, if he sees the deduction and coherence of the parts; but it is not certain that every man shall be able to deduce whatsoever is either immediately, or certainly deducible from these premises; and then since salvation is promised to the explicit belief of these, I see not how any man can justify the making the way to heaven narrower then Jesus Christ hath made it, it being already so narrow, that there are few that find it.

In the pursuance of this great truth, the Apostles or the holy men, their contemporaries and disciples, composed a creed to be a rule of faith to all Christians, as appears in Irenæus, Tertullian,* St. Cyprian,† St. Austin,‡ Ruffinus,§ and divers others;|| which creed, unless it had contained all the entire object of faith, and the foundation of religion, it cannot be imagined to what purpose it should serve; and that it was so esteemed by the whole church of God in all ages, appears in this, that since faith is a necessary predisposition to baptism in all persons capable of the use of reason, all *Catechumens* in the Latin church coming to baptism, were interrogated concerning their faith, and gave satisfaction in the recitation of this creed. And in the East they professed exactly the same faith, something differing in words, but of the same matter, reason, design, and consequence; and so they did at Jerusalem, so at Aquileia. This was that *correct and blame-*

* Apol. contr. Gent. c. 47. de veland. virg. c. 1.

† In exposit. Symbol. ‡ Serm. 5. de tempore, cap. 2.

§ In Symbol. apud Cyprian.

|| All the orthodox fathers maintain that the creed is of apostolic origin. *Sext. Senensis, lib. 2. bibl. 5. vide Genebr. l. 3. de Trin.*

less faith proclaimed by the holy Catholic and Apostolic church of God apart from all novelty and innovation: ὁρθὴ καὶ ἀμώμητος πίστις, ἥνπερ κηρύττει ἡ ἀγία τῇ Θεῷ καθολικῇ καὶ ἀποστολικῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ κατ' ἰδένα τρόπον καινισμόν δεξαμένη. These Articles were the instructions left by the holy Apostles and their fellow labourers to the holy churches of God: τὰ τῶν ἁγίων ἀποστόλων καὶ τῶν μετ' ἐκείνων διατριβάντων ἐν ταῖς ἀγίαις Θεῷ ἐκκλησίαις διδάγματα.* Now since the Apostles and apostolical men and churches in these their symbols, did recite particular Articles to a considerable number, and were so minute in their recitation, as to descend to circumstances, it is more than probable that they omitted nothing of necessity; and that these Articles are not general principles, in the bosom of which many more Articles equally necessary to be believed explicitly and more particular are enfolded; but that it is as minute an explication of those fundamental principles I before reckoned, as is necessary to salvation.

And therefore Tertullian calls the creed *the rule of faith*, by whose guidance, whatever appears ambiguous or obscure in Scripture may be investigated and explained. *The seal of the heart and the oath of our warfare. Regulum fidei, quâ salvâ & formâ ejus manente in suo ordine, possit in Scriptura tractari & inquiri si quid videtur vel ambiguitate pendere vel obscuritate obumbrari. Cordis signaculum & nostræ militiæ Sacramentum*, St. Ambrose calls it, lib. 3. *de velandis virgin.* *The comprehension and perfection of our faith. Comprehensio fidei nostræ atque perfectio*, St. Austin, *Serm.* 115. *The confession, declaration, and rule of faith. Confessio, expositio, regula fidei*, generally by the

* L. 5. Cod. de S. Trinit. et fid. Cath. cum recta.

ancients. The profession of this creed, was the exposition of that saying of St. Peter, *συνειδήσεως ἀγαθῆς ἐπερώτημα εἰς Θεόν*, *The answer of a good conscience towards God*. For of the recitation and profession of this creed in baptism, it is that Tertullian, *On the resurrection of the body*, says, *The soul is not consecrated by the water, but by the truth professed. Anima non lotionē, sed responsione sancitur*. And of this was the prayer of Hillary, *lib. 12. de Trinit.* *Regard this expression of my conscience, that I may always continue in the professions I have made by baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; the sign of my regeneration. Conserva hanc conscientię meę vocem ut quod in regenerationis meę symbolo baptizatus in Patre, Filio, Spir. S. professus sum semper obtineam*. And according to the rule and reason of this discourse, (that it may appear that the creed hath in it all Articles *primo & per se*, primely and universally) the creed is just such an explication of that faith which the Apostles preached, viz. the creed which St. Paul recites, as contains in it all those things which entitle Christ to us in the capacities of our Law-giver and our Saviour, such as enable him to the great work of redemption, according to the predictions concerning him, and such as engage and encourage our services. For, taking out the Article of Christ's descent into Hell, (which was not in the old creed, as appears in some of the copies I before referred to, in Tertullian, Ruffinus, and Irenæus; and indeed was omitted in all the confessions of the eastern churches, in the church of Rome, and in the Nicene creed, which by adoption came to be the creed of the Catholic church) all other Articles are such as directly

constitute the parts and work of our redemption, such as clearly derive the honour to Christ, and enable him with the capacities of our Saviour and Lord. The rest engage our services by proposition of such Articles, which are rather promises than propositions; and the whole creed, take it in any of the old forms, is but an analysis of that which St. Paul calls the word of salvation, whereby we shall be saved, viz. that we confess Jesus to be Lord, and that God raised him from the dead; by the first whereof he became our law-giver and our guardian; by the second he was our Saviour; the other things are but parts and main actions of those two. Now what reason there is in the world that can enwrap any thing else within the foundation, that is, in the whole body of Articles simply and inseparably necessary, or in the prime original necessity of faith, I cannot possibly imagine. These do the work, and therefore nothing can upon the true grounds of reason enlarge the necessity to the inclosure of other Articles.

Now if more were necessary than the Articles of the creed, I demand why was it made the characteristic * note of a Christian from a Heretic, or a Jew, or an Infidel? or to what purpose was it composed? Or if this was intended as sufficient, did the Apostles or those churches which they founded, know any thing else to be necessary? If they did not, then either nothing more is necessary, (I speak of matters of mere belief,) or they did not know all the will of the Lord, and so were unfit dispensers of the

* Vide Isidor. de Eccles. offic. lib. 1. cap. 20. Suidan. Turnebum. lib. 2. c. 30. advers. Venant. For. in Exeg. Symb. Feu-
ar- dent. in Iren. lib. 1. c. 2.

mysteries of the kingdom; or if they did know more was necessary, and yet would not insert it, they did an act of public notice, and consigned it to all ages of the church to no purpose, unless to beguile credulous people by making them believe their faith was sufficient, having tried it by that touch-stone apostolical, when there was no such matter.

But if this was sufficient to bring men to heaven then, why not now? If the Apostles admitted all to their communion that believed this creed, why shall we exclude any that preserve the same entire? why is not our faith of these Articles of as much efficacy for bringing us to heaven, as it was in the churches apostolical?—who had guides more infallible that might without error have taught them superstructures enough, if they had been necessary: and so they did. But that they did not insert them into the creed, when they might have done it with as much certainty as these Articles, makes it clear to my understanding, that other things were not necessary, but these were; that whatever profit and advantages might come from other Articles, yet these were sufficient, and however certain persons might accidentally be obliged to believe much more, yet this was the one and only foundation of faith upon which all persons were to build their hopes of heaven. This was therefore necessary to be taught to all, because of necessity to be believed by all: so that although other persons might commit a delinquency *in point of order*, if they did not know or did not believe much more, because they were obliged to further disquisitions in order to other ends, yet none of these who held the creed entire, could perish for

want of necessary faith, though possibly he might for supine negligence, or affected ignorance, or some other fault which had influence upon his opinions and his understanding, he having a new supervening obligation from accidental circumstances, to know and believe more.

Neither are we obliged to make these Articles more particular and minute than the creed. For since the Apostles, and indeed our blessed Lord himself promised heaven to them, who believed him to be the Christ that was to come into the world, and that he, who believes in him, should be partaker of the resurrection and life eternal, he will be as good as his word: yet because this Article was very general, and a complexion rather than a single proposition; the Apostles and others our Fathers in Christ did make it more explicit, and though they have said no more than what lay entire and ready formed in the bosom of the great Article, yet they made their extracts to great purpose and absolute sufficiency, and therefore there needs no more deductions or remoter consequences from the first great Article, than the Creed of the Apostles. For although whatsoever is certainly deduced from any of these Articles made already so explicit, is as certainly true, and as much to be believed as the Article itself, because *nothing but what is true can flow from truth, ex veris possunt nil nisi vera sequi*, yet because it is not certain that our deductions from them are certain, and what one calls evident, is so obscure to another, that he believes it false; it is the best and only safe course to rest in that explication the Apostles have made, because if any of these apostolical deductions were not demonstrable evidently to follow from that great Article to which

salvation is promised, yet the authority of them who compiled the symbol, the plain description of the Articles from the words of Scriptures, the evidence of reason demonstrating these to be the whole foundation, - are sufficient upon great grounds of reason to ascertain us; but if we go farther, besides the easiness of being deceived, we relying upon our own discourses, (which though they may be true and then bind us to follow them, but yet no more than when they only seem truest,) yet they cannot make the thing certain to another, much less necessary in itself. And since God would not bind us upon pain of sin and punishment, to make deductions ourselves, much less would he bind us to follow another man's logic as an Article of our faith; I say much less another man's; for our own integrity (for we will certainly be true to ourselves, and do our own business heartily) is as fit and proper to be employed as another man's ability. He cannot secure me that his ability is absolute and the greatest, but I can be more certain that my own purposes and fidelity to myself is such. And since it is necessary to rest somewhere, lest we should run to an infinity, it is best to rest there where the Apostles and the churches apostolical rested; when not only they who are able to judge, but others who are not, are equally ascertained of the certainty and of the sufficiency of that explication.

This I say, not that I believe it unlawful or unsafe for the Church or any of the ecclesiastical rulers, or any wise man to extend his own creed to any thing which may certainly follow from any one of the Articles; but I say, that no such deduction is fit to be prest on others

as an article of faith ; and that every deduction which is so made, unless it be such a thing as is at first evident to all, is but sufficient to make a human faith, nor can it amount to a divine, much less can be obligatory to bind a person of a differing persuasion to subscribe under pain of losing his faith, or being a heretic. For it is a demonstration, that nothing can be necessary to be believed under pain of damnation, but such propositions of which it is certain, that God hath spoken and taught them to us, and of which it is certain that this is their sense and purpose. For if the sense be uncertain, we can no more be obliged to believe it in a certain sense, than we are to believe it at all, if it were not certain that God delivered it. But if it be only certain, that God spake it, and not certain to what sense, our faith of it is to be as indeterminate as its sense, and it can be no other in the nature of the thing, nor is it consonant to God's justice to believe of him that he can or will require more. And this is of the nature of those propositions which Aristotle calls *θεσται*, to which without any further probation, all wise men will give assent at its first publication. And therefore deductions inevident, from the evident and plain letter of faith, are as great recessions from the obligation, as they are from the simplicity, and certainty of the article. And this I also affirm, although the church of any one denomination, or represented in a council, shall make the deduction or declaration. For unless Christ had promised his Spirit to protect every particular church from all errors less material, unless he had promised an absolute universal infallibility *even in the most trifling matters*, unless superstructures be of the same

necessity with the foundation, and that God's Spirit doth not only preserve his church in the being of a church, but in a certainty of not saying any thing that is less certain; and that whether they will or no too; we may be bound to peace and obedience, to silence, and to charity, but have not a new article of faith made; and a new proposition though consequent (as it is said) from an article of faith becomes not therefore a part of the faith, nor of absolute necessity. ¶ *What did the church ever aim to do by the decrees of her councils, but to make what was believed before believed more firmly?* ¶ *Quid unquam aliud ecclesia conciliorum decretis enisa est, nisi ut quod antea simpliciter credebatur, hoc idem postea diligentius crederetur,* said Vincentius Lirinensis; whatsoever was of necessary belief before is so still, and hath a new degree added by reason of a new light or a clear explication; but no positions can be adopted into the foundation. The church hath power to intend our faith, but not to extend it; to make our belief more evident, but not more large and comprehensive. For Christ and his Apostles concealed nothing, that was necessary to the integrity of Christian faith, or salvation of our souls; Christ declared all the will of his Father, and the Apostles were stewards and dispensers of the same mysteries, and were faithful in all the house, and therefore concealed nothing, but taught the whole doctrine of Christ; so they said themselves. And indeed if they did not teach all the doctrine of faith, an angel or a man might have taught us other things than what they taught, without deserving an anathema, but not without deserving a blessing for making up that faith entire, which the Apostles left imperfect. ¶ Now if they taught all

the whole body of faith, either the church in the following ages lost part of the faith, (and then where was their infallibility, and the effect of those glorious promises to which she pretends and hath certain title; for she may as well introduce a falsehood as lose a truth, it being as much promised to her that the Holy Ghost shall lead her into all truth, as that she shall be preserved from all errors as appears, John, xvi. 13.) Or if she retained all the faith which Christ and his Apostles consigned and taught, then no age can by declaring any point, make that be an article of faith which was not so in all ages of Christianity before such declaration. And indeed if the church* by declaring an article can make that to be necessary, which before was not necessary, I do not see how it can stand with the charity of the church so to do. (especially after so long experience she hath had that all men will not believe every such decision or explication) for by so doing she makes the narrow way to heaven narrower, and chalks out one path more to the devil than he had before, and yet the way was broad enough when it was at the narrowest. For before, differing persons might be saved in diversity of persuasions, and now after this declaration if they cannot, there is no other alteration made, but that some shall be damned, who before even in the same dispositions and belief should have been beatified persons. For therefore, it is well for the fathers of the primitive church, that their errors were not discovered, for if they had been contested, (for that would have

* Vide Jacob Almain. in 3 Sent. d. 25. Q. Vnic. Dub. 3. Patet ergo, quod nulla veritas est Catholicæ ex approbatione, Ecclesiæ vel Papæ, *Gabr. Biel. in 3. Sent. Dist. 25. Q. Unic. Art. 3. Dub. 3. ad finem.*

been called discovery enough) *"either they must have relinquished their errors or been expelled from the church," vel errores emendassent, vel ab ecclesia ejecti fuissent.** But it is better as it was, they went to heaven by that good fortune, whereas otherwise they might have gone to the devil. And yet there were some errors, particularly that of St. Cyprian that was discovered, and he went to heaven, it is thought; possibly they might so too for all this pretence. But suppose it true, yet whether that declaration of an article of which with safety we either might have doubted or been ignorant, does more good than the damning of those many souls occasionally, but yet certainly and foreknowingly does hurt, I leave it to all wise and good men to determine. And yet besides this, it cannot enter into my thoughts, that it can possibly consist with God's goodness to put it into the power of man so palpably and openly to alter the paths and inlets to heaven, and to straiten his mercies, unless he had furnished these men with an infallible judgment and an infallible prudence, and a never failing charity; that they should never do it but with great necessity, and with great truth, and without ends and human designs, of which I think no arguments can make us certain what the Primitive Church hath done in this case: I shall afterwards consider and give an account of it, but for the present there is no insecurity in ending there where the Apostles ended, in building where they built, in resting where they left us, unless the same infallibility which they had, had still continued, which I think I shall hereafter make evident it did not. And therefore those ex-

* Bellar. de Laicis, L. 3. c. 20. Sect. ad Primam Confirmationem.

tensions of creed, which were made in the first ages of the church, although for the matter they were most true; yet because it was not certain that they should be so, and they might have been otherwise, therefore they could not be in the same order of faith, nor in the same degrees of necessity to be believed with the articles apostolical; and therefore, whether they did well or no in laying the same weight upon them, or whether they did lay the same weight or no, we will afterwards consider.

But to return. I consider that a foundation of faith cannot alter, unless a new building be to be made, the foundation is the same still; and this foundation is no other but that which Christ and his Apostles laid, which doctrine is like himself, yesterday and to day, and the same for ever: So that the articles of necessary belief to all, (which are the only foundation) they cannot be several in several ages, and to several persons. Nay, the sentence and declaration of the church cannot lay this foundation, or make any thing of the foundation, because the church cannot lay her own foundation; we must suppose her to be a building, and that she relies upon the foundation, which is therefore supposed to be laid before, because she is built upon it, or, (to make it more explicate) because a cloud may arise from the allegory of building and foundation, it is plainly thus; the church being a company of men obliged to the duties of faith and obedience, the duty and obligation being of the faculties of will and understanding to adhere to such an object, must presuppose the object made ready for them; for as the object is before the act in order of nature, and therefore not to be produced or encreased by

the faculty, (which is receptive, and cannot be active upon its proper object :) so the object of the church's faith is in order of nature before the church, or before the act and habit of faith, and therefore cannot be enlarged by the church, any more than the act of the visive faculty can add visibility to the object. So that if we have found out what foundation Christ and his Apostles did lay, that is what body and system of articles simply necessary they taught and required of us to believe, we need not, we cannot go any further for foundation, we cannot enlarge that system or collection. ¶ Now then, although all that they said is true, and nothing of it to be doubted or disbelieved, yet as all that they said is neither written nor delivered, (because all was not necessary) so we know that of those things which are written, some things are as far off from the foundation as those things which were omitted, and therefore although now accidentally they must be believed by all that know them, yet it is not necessary all should know them; and that all should know them in the same sense and interpretation, is neither probable nor obligatory; but therefore since these things are to be distinguished by some differences of necessary and not necessary, whether or no is not the declaration of Christ and his Apostles affixing salvation to the belief of some great comprehensive articles, and the act of the Apostles rendering them as explicit as they thought convenient, and consigning that creed made so explicit, as a tessera of a Christian, as a comprehension of the articles of his belief, as a sufficient disposition and an expression of the faith of a *Catechumen* in order to baptism; whether

or no I say, all this be not sufficient probation, that these only are of absolute necessity, that this is sufficient for mere belief in order to heaven, and that therefore whosoever believes these Articles heartily and explicitly, Θεὸς μένει ἐν αὐτῷ, as St. John's expression is, *God dwelleth in him*, I leave it to be considered and judged of from the premises; only this, if the old Doctors had been made judges in these questions, they would have passed their affirmative; for to instance in one for all, of this it was said by *Tertullian*,[†] This symbol is the one sufficient immovable, unalterable and unchangeable rule of faith, that admits no increment or decrement; but if the integrity and unity of this be preserved, in all other things men may take a Liberty of enlarging their knowledges and Prophesyings, according as they are assisted by the grace of God.*

SECTION II.

Of heresy and the nature of it, and that it is to be accounted according to the strict capacity of Christian Faith, and not in opinions speculative; nor ever to pious persons.

AND thus I have represented a short draught of the object of faith, and its foundation; the

* Regula quidem fidei una omnino est sola immobilis et irreformabilis, &c. Hac lege fidei manente cætera jam disciplinæ et conversationis admittunt novitatem correctionis, operante scil. et proficiente usque in finem gratia Dei.—Lib. de veland. Virg.

next consideration in order to our main design, is to consider what was and what ought to be the judgment of the Apostles concerning heresy: for although there are more kinds of vices, than there are of virtues; yet the number of them is to be taken by accounting the transgressions of their virtues, and by the limits of faith; we may also reckon the analogy and proportions of heresy, that as we have seen who was called faithful by the apostolical men, we may also perceive who were listed by them in the catalogue of heretics, that we in our judgments may proceed accordingly.

And first the word heresy is used in Scripture indifferently, in a good sense for a sect or division of opinion, and men following it, or sometimes in a bad sense, for a false opinion signally condemned; but these kind of people were then called Anti-christs and false prophets more frequently than heretics, and then there were many of them in the world. But it is observable that no heresies are noted with distinct particularity in Scripture, but such as are great errors practical, such whose doctrines taught impiety, or such who denied the coming of Christ directly or by consequence, not remote or wire-drawn, but prime and immediate; and therefore in the *Code de S. Trinitate & fide Catholica*, heresy is called ἀσεβής δόξα, και ἀθέμιτος διδασκαλία, *a wicked opinion and an ungodly doctrine.*

The first false doctrine we find condemned by the Apostles, was the opinion of Simon Magus, who thought the Holy Ghost was to be bought with money; he thought very dishonourably to the blessed Spirit; but yet his followers are rather noted of a vice, neither resting in the

understanding, nor derived from it, but wholly practical; it is simony, not heresy, though in Simon it was a false opinion proceeding from a low account of God, and promoted by his own ends of pride and covetousness: the great heresy that troubled them was the doctrine of the necessity of keeping the Law of Moses, the necessity of circumcision; against which doctrine they were therefore zealous, because it was a direct overthrow to the very end and excellency of Christ's coming. And this was an opinion most pertinaciously and obstinately maintained by the Jews, and had made a sect among the Galatians, and this was indeed wholly in opinion; and against it the Apostles opposed two articles of the creed, which served at several times according as the Jews changed their opinion, and left some degrees of their error, *I believe in Jesus Christ, and I believe the holy Catholic Church*; for they therefore pressed the necessity of Moses' law, because they were unwilling to forego the glorious appellative of being God's own peculiar people; and that salvation was of the Jews, and that the rest of the world were capable of that grace, no otherwise but by adoption into their religion, and becoming proselytes: but this was so ill a doctrine, as that it overthrew the great benefits of Christ's coming; for *if they were circumcised, Christ profited them nothing*, meaning this, that Christ will not be a Saviour to them who do not acknowledge him for their Law-giver; and they neither confess him their Law-giver nor their Saviour, that look to be justified by the Law of Moses, and observation of legal rites; so that this doctrine was a direct enemy to the foundation, and therefore the Apostles were so zealous against it. Now

then that other opinion, which the Apostles met at Jerusalem to resolve, was but a piece of that opinion ; for the Jews and proselytes were drawn off from their lees and sediment, by degrees, step by step. At first, they would not endure any should be saved but themselves and their proselytes. Being wrought off from this height by miracles, and preaching of the Apostles, they admitted the Gentiles to a possibility of salvation, but yet so as to hope for it by Moses' Law. From which foolery, when they were with much ado dissuaded, and told that salvation was by faith in Christ, not by works of the Law, yet they resolved to plow with an ox and an ass still, and join Moses with Christ ; not as shadow and substance, but in an equal confederation ; Christ should save the Gentiles if he was helped by Moses, but alone Christianity could not do it. Against this the Apostles assembled at Jerusalem, and made a decision of the question, tying some of the Gentiles (such only who were blended by the Jews as fellow countrymen) to observation of such rites which the Jews had derived by tradition from Noah, intending by this to satisfy the Jews as far as might be with a reasonable compliance and condescension ; the other Gentiles who were unmixt, in the mean while, remaining free as appears in the liberty St. Paul gave the church of Corinth of eating idol sacrifices (expressly against the decree at Jerusalem) so it were without scandal. And yet for all this care and curious discretion, a little of the leaven still remained : all this they thought did so concern the Gentiles, that it was totally impertinent to the Jews ; still they had a distinction to satisfy the letter of the Apostles decree, and yet to persist in their old opinion ; and this so continued

that fifteen Christian bishops in succession were circumcised, even until the destruction of Jerusalem, under Adrian, as Eusebius reports.*

First, by the way let me observe, that never any matter of question in the Christian Church was determined with greater solemnity, or more full authority of the church than this question concerning circumcision: no less than the whole college of the Apostles and Elders at Jerusalem, and that with a decree of the highest sanction, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." Secondly, either the case of the Hebrews in particular was omitted, and no determination concerning them, whether it were necessary or lawful for them to be circumcised, or else it was involved in the decree, and intended to oblige the Jews. If it was omitted since the question was concerning what was essential, (for, I Paul, *say unto you, if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing*) it is very remarkable how the Apostles to gain the Jews, and to comply with their violent prejudice in behalf of Moses' Law, did for a time tolerate their dissent even in what was otherwise essential, which I doubt not but was intended as a precedent for the church to imitate for ever after: but if it was not omitted, either all the multitude of the Jews (which St. James then their bishop expressed by *πολλὰ μυριάδες*; *Thou seest how many myriads of Jews that believe and yet are zealots for the law*;† and Eusebius, speaking of Justus, says, he was *one of the infinite multitude of the circumcision who believed in Jesus*.)‡ I say all these did perish, and their believing in Christ served them

* Euseb. l. 4. Eccles. Hist. c. 5. † Acts 21, 20.

‡ L. 3. 32. Eccles. Hist.

to no other ends, but in the infinity of their torments to upbraid them with hypocrisy and heresy ; or if they were saved, it is apparent how merciful God was, and pitiful to human infirmities, that in a point of so great concernment did pity their weakness, and pardon their errors, and love their good mind, since their prejudice was little less than insuperable, and had fair probabilities, at least it was such as might abuse a wise and good man (and so it did many) they did err with a good intention.* And if I mistake not, this consideration St. Paul urged as a reason why God forgave him who was a persecutor of the saints, because he did it ignorantly in unbelief, that is, he was not convinced in his understanding, of the truth of the way which he persecuted, he in the mean while remaining in that incredulity, not out of malice or ill ends, but the mistakes of humanity and a pious zeal, therefore *God had mercy on him* : and so it was in this great question of circumcision, here only was the difference, the invincibility of St. Paul's error, and the honesty of his heart caused God so to pardon him as to bring him to the knowledge of Christ, which God therefore did because it was necessary, *necessitate medii* ; no salvation was consistent with the actual remanency of that error ; but in the question of circumcision, although they by consequence did overthrow the end of Christ's coming : yet because it was such a consequence, which they being hindered by a prejudice not impious did not perceive, God tolerated them in their error till time and a continual dropping of the lessons and dictates apostolical did wear it out, and then the doctrine

* 1 Tim. i. 13.

put on its apparel, and became clothed with necessity; they in the mean time so kept to the foundation, that is, Jesus Christ crucified and risen again, that although this did make a violent concussion of it, yet they held fast with their heart, what they ignorantly destroyed with their tongue, (which Saul before his conversion did not) that God upon other titles, then an actual dereliction of their error did bring them to salvation.

And in the descent of so many years, I find not any one anathema past by the Apostles or their successors, upon any of the Bishops of Jerusalem, or the believers of the circumcision, and yet it was a point as clearly determined, and of as great necessity, as any of those questions that at this day, vex and crucify Christendom.

Besides this question, and that of the resurrection, commenced in the church of Corinth, and promoted with some variety of sense by Hymenæus and Philetus in Asia, who said that the resurrection was past already, I do not remember any other heresy named in Scripture, but such as were errors of impiety, such as was particularly, forbidding to marry, and the heresy of the Nicolaitans, a doctrine that taught the necessity of lust and frequent fornication.

But in all the animadversions against errors made by the Apostles in the New Testament, no pious person was condemned, no man that did invincibly err; but something that was amiss, in the principle of action, was that which the Apostles did regard. And it is very considerable, that even they of the circumcision, who in so great numbers did heartily believe in Christ, and and yet most violently retain circumcision, and

without question went to heaven in great numbers; yet of the number of these very men, they came deeply under censure, when to their error they added impiety: so long as it stood with charity and without human ends and secular interests, so long it was either innocent or connived at; but when they grew covetous, and for filthy lucre's sake taught the same doctrine which others did in the simplicity of their hearts, then they turned hereticks, then they were termed seducers; and Titus was commanded to look to them, and to silence them; *For there are many that are intractable and vain babblers, seducers of minds, especially they of the circumcision, who seduce whole houses, teaching things that they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.* These indeed were not to be indured, but to be silenced, by the conviction of sound doctrine, and to be rebuked sharply, and avoided.

For heresy is not an error of the understanding, but an error of the will. And this is clearly insinuated in Scripture, in the stile whereof faith and a good life are made one duty, and vice is called opposite to faith, and heresy opposed to holiness and sanctity. So in St. Paul, *For, (saith he) the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned; ** from which charity, and purity, and goodness, and sincerity, because some have wandered, have turned aside unto vain jangling. And immediately after, he reckons the oppositions to faith and sound doctrine, and instances only in vices that stain the lives of Christians, *the unjust, the unclean, the uncharitable, the liar, the perjured*

* 1 Tim. i. 5.

person; these are the enemies of the true doctrine. And therefore St. Peter having given in charge, to add to our virtue, patience, temperance, charity, and the like; gives this for a reason, for if these things be in you, and abound, ye shall be fruitful in the *knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*. So that knowledge and faith is *inter præcepta morum*, is part of a good life: * And Saint Paul calls faith, or the form of sound words, κατ' ἐνσεβείαν διδασκαλίαν, the doctrine that is according to godliness, 1 Tim. vi. 3.† And to believe in the truth, and to have pleasure in unrighteousness, are by the same Apostle opposed, and intimate, that piety and faith is all one thing; faith must be ὁγής και ἁμωμος, *entire and holy too*, or it is not right. It was the heresy of the Gnosticks, that it was no matter how men lived, so they did but believe aright: which wicked doctrine Tatianus a learned Christian, did so detest, that he fell into a quite contrary, *Non est curandum quid quisque credat, id tantum curandum est quod quisque faciat*; it is of no consequence what a man believes, but only what he does: And thence came the sect Encratites: Both these heresies sprang from the too nice distinguishing the faith from the piety and good life of a Christian: they are both but one duty. However, they may be distinguished, if we speak like philosophers; they cannot be distinguished, when we speak like Christians.

* What then is belief or faith? It is in my opinion, confidently to believe in Christ, that is, to be faithful to God, or faithfully to keep his commandments: Quid igitur credulitas vel fides? opinor fidelitèr hominem Christo credere, id est, fidelem Deo esse, hoc est, fideliter Dei mandata servare. *So Salvian.*

† ἀσεβῆς τῶν χριστιανῶν θρησκεία; That is our religion or faith, the whole manner of serving God, *C. de summâ Trinit. et fide Cathol.*

For to believe what God hath commanded, is in order to a good life; and to live well, is the product of that believing, and as proper emanation from it, as from its proper principle, and as heat is from the fire. And therefore, in Scripture, they are used promiscuously in sense, and in expression, as not only being subjected in the same person, but also in the same faculty; faith is as truly seated in the will, as in the understanding, and a good life, as meerly derives from the understanding as the will. Both of them are matters of choice and of election, neither of them an effect natural and invincible, or necessary antecedently. And indeed, if we remember that St. Paul reckons heresy amongst the works of the flesh, and ranks it with all manner of practical impieties, we shall easily perceive, that if a man mingles not a vice with his opinion, if he be innocent in his life, though deceived in his doctrine, his error is his misery, not his crime; it makes him an argument of weakness and an object of pity, but not a person sealed up to ruin and reprobation.

For as the nature of faith is, so is the nature of heresy, contraries having the same proportion and commensuration. Now faith, if it be taken for an act of the understanding meerly, is so far from being that excellent grace that justifies us, that it is not good at all, in any kind but *in genere naturæ*, naturally; and makes the understanding better in itself, or pleasing to God, just as strength doth the arm, or beauty the face, or health the body; these are natural perfections indeed, and so knowledge and a true belief is to the understanding. But this makes us not at all more acceptable to God; for then the unlearned were certainly in a damnable condition, and all good

scholars should be saved (whereas I am afraid too much of the contrary is true.) But unless faith be made moral by the mixtures of choice, and charity, it is nothing but a natural perfection, not a grace or a virtue; and this is demonstrably proved in this, that by the confession of all men of all interests and persuasions, in matters of meer belief, invincible ignorance is our excuse if we be deceived, which could not be, but that neither to believe aright is commendable, nor to believe amiss is reprovable; but where both one and the other is voluntary and chosen antecedently or consequently, by prime election or *ex post facto*, afterwards; and so comes to be considered in morality, and is part of a good life or a bad life respectively. Just so it is in heresy, if it be a design of ambition, and making of a sect (so Erasmus expounds St. Paul ἀρετικὸν ἀνθρώπου, if it be for filthy lucre's sake as it was in some, that were of the circumcision, if it be of pride and love of preeminence, as it was in Diotrephes, who loved to have the preeminence, or out of peevishness and indocibleness of disposition, or of a contentious spirit, that is, that their feet are not shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in all these cases the error is just so damnable, as its principle, but therefore damnable not of itself, but by reason of its adherency. And if any shall say any otherwise, it is to say, that some men shall be damned when they cannot help it, perish without their own fault, and be miserable for ever, because of their unhappiness to be deceived through their own simplicity and natural or accidental, but inculpable infirmity.

For it cannot stand with the goodness of God, who does so know our infirmities, that he pardons

many things in which our wills, indeed, have the least share, (but some they have) but are overborne with the violence of an impetuous temptation ; I say, it is inconsistent with his goodness to condemn those who err where the error hath nothing of the will in it, who therefore cannot repent of their error, because they believe it true, who therefore cannot make compensation because they know not that they are tied to dereliction of it. And although all heretics are in this condition, that is, they believe their errors to be true ; yet there is a vast difference between them who believe so out of simplicity, and them who are given over to believe a lie, as a punishment or an effect of some other wickedness or impiety. For all have a concomitant assent to the truth of what they believe ; and no man can at the same time believe what he does not believe, but this assent of the understanding in heretics is caused not by force of argument, but the argument is made forcible by something that is amiss in his will ; and although a heretic may peradventure have a stronger argument for his error, than some true believer for his right persuasion ; yet it is not considerable how strong his argument is (because in a weak understanding, a small motive will produce a great persuasion, like gentle physic in a weak body) but that which here is considerable, is, what it is that made his argument forcible. If his invincible and harmless prejudice, if his weakness, if his education, if his mistaking piety, if any thing that hath no venom, nor a sting in it, there the heartiness of his persuasion is no sin, but his misery and his excuse ; but if any thing that is evil in the principle of his conduct, did incline his understanding, if his opinion did commence upon pride,

or is nourished by covetousness, or continues through stupid carelessness, or increases by pertinacy, or is confirmed by obstinacy, then the innocency of the error is disbanded, his misery is changed into a crime, and begins its own punishment. But by the way I must observe, that when I reckoned *obstinacy* amongst those things which make a false opinion criminal, it is to be understood with some discretion and distinction. For there is an obstinacy of will which is indeed highly guilty of misdemeanor, and when the school makes pertinacy or obstinacy to be the formality of heresy, they say not true at all, unless it be meant the obstinacy of the will and choice; and if they do, they speak imperfectly and inartificially, this being but one of the causes that makes error become heresy; the adequate and perfect formality of heresy is whatsoever makes the error voluntary and vicious, as is clear in Scripture, reckoning covetousness, and pride, and lust, and whatsoever is vicious to be its causes; (and in habits, or moral changes and productions, whatever alters the essence of a habit, or gives it a new formality, is not to be reckoned the efficient but the form) but there is also an obstinacy (you may call it) but indeed, is nothing but a resolution and confirmation of understanding which is not in a man's power honestly to alter, and it is not all the commands of humanity, that can be argument sufficient to make a man leave believing that for which he thinks he hath reason, and for which he hath such arguments as heartily convince him. Now the persisting in an opinion finally, and against all the confidence and imperiousness of human commands, that makes not this criminal obstinacy, if the erring person have so much

humility of will as to submit to whatever God says, and that no vice in his will hinders him from believing it. So that we must carefully distinguish continuance in opinion from obstinacy, confidence of understanding from peevishness of affection, a not being convinced from a resolution never to be convinced, upon human ends and vicious principles: *Scimus quosdam quod semel imbiberint nolle deponere, nec propositum suum facile mutare, sed salvo inter collegas pacis et concordie vinculo quædam propria quæ apud se semel sint usurpata retinere; Qua in re nec nos vim cuiquam facimus, aut legem damus:** We are acquainted with some persons who are unwilling to relinquish what they have once believed, nor can they be easily convinced, but still persist in retaining their notions, but, in the spirit of love and peace; in which matter, we neither use compulsion nor authority, saith St. Cyprian. And he himself was such a one; for he persisted in his opinion of rebaptization until death, and yet his obstinacy was not called criminal, or his error turned to heresy. But to return.

In this sense, it is, that a heretic is *αὐτοκατάκριτος*, self-condemned, not by an immediate express sentence of understanding, but by his own act or fault brought into condemnation. As it is in the Canon Law *Notorious percussor Clerici* is *ipso jure* excommunicate, not *per sententiam latam ab homine*, but *à jure*, a man who strikes a clergyman, is excommunicated by his own conscience, not so much by a public verdict of man as by right. No man hath passed sentence from a judgment seat, but law hath decreed it by express enactment: so

* Lib. 2. Epist. 1.

it is in the case of a heretic. The understanding which is judge, condemns him not by an express sentence ; for he errs with as much simplicity in the result, as he had malice in the principle : but there is *setentia lata à jure*, his will which is his law, that hath condemned him. And this is gathered from that saying of St. Paul, 2 Tim. iii. 13. *But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived* : first they are evil men ; malice and peevishness is in their wills ; then they turn heretics and seduce others, and while they grow worse and worse, the error is master of their understanding, they are deceived themselves, *given over to believe a lie*, saith the Apostle : they first play the knave, and then play the fool ; they first sell themselves to the purchase of vain glory or ill ends, and then they become possessed with a lying spirit, and believe those things heartily, which if they were honest, they should with God's grace discover and disclaim. So that now we see that *a hearty persuasion in a false article* does not always make the error to be esteemed involuntary ; but then only when it is as innocent in the principle as it is confident in the present persuasion. And such persons who by their ill lives and vicious actions, or manifest designs (for by their fruits ye shall know them) give testimony of such criminal indispositions, so as competent judges by human and prudent estimate may so judge them, then they are to be declared heretics, and avoided. And if this were not true, it were vain that the Apostle commands us to avoid an heretic : for no external act can pass upon a man for a crime that is not cognizable.

Now every man that errs, though in a matter of consequence, so long as the foundation is entire,

cannot be suspected justly guilty of a crime to give his error a formality of heresy; for we see many a good man miserably deceived, (as we shall make it appear afterwards) and he that is the best amongst men, certainly hath so much humility to think he may be easily deceived, and twenty to one but he is in something or other; yet if his error be not voluntary, and part of an ill life, then because he lives a good life, he is a good man, and therefore no heretic: no man is a heretic against his will. And if it be pretended that every man that is deceived, is therefore proud, because he does not submit his understanding to the authority of God or man respectively, and so his error becomes a heresy: to this I answer, that there is no Christian man but will submit his understanding to God, and believes whatsoever he hath said; but always provided, he knows that God hath said so, else he must do his duty by a readiness to obey when he shall know it. But for obedience or humility of the understanding towards men, that is a thing of another consideration, and it must first be made evident that his understanding must be submitted to men; and who those men are, must also be certain, before it will be adjudged a sin not to submit. But if I mistake not, Christ's saying, *call no man master upon earth*, is so great a prejudice against this pretence, as I doubt it will go near wholly to make it invalid. So that as the worshipping of angels is a humility indeed, but it is voluntary and a will-worship to an ill sense, not to be excused by the excellency of humility, nor the virtue of religion: so is the relying upon the judgment of man, an humility too, but such as comes not under that obedience of faith which is

the duty of every Christian ; but entrenches upon that duty which we owe to Christ as an acknowledgment that he is our great Master, and the Prince of the Catholic Church. But whether it be or be not, if that be the question, whether the disagreeing person be to be determined by the dictates of men, I am sure the dictates of men must not determine him in that question, but it must be settled by some higher principle : so that if of that question the disagreeing person does opine, or believe, or err *bonâ fide*, he is not therefore to be judged a heretic, because he submits not his understanding ; because till it be sufficiently made certain to him that he is bound to submit, he may innocently and piously disagree, and this not submitting is therefore not a crime, (and so cannot make a heresy) because without a crime he may lawfully doubt whether he be bound to submit or no, for that is the question. And if in such questions which have influence upon a whole system of theology, a man may doubt lawfully if he doubts heartily, because the authority of men being the thing in question, cannot be the judge of this question ; and therefore being rejected, or (which is all one) being questioned, that is, not believed, cannot render the doubting person guilty of pride, and by consequence not of heresy, much more may particular questions be doubted of, and the authority of men examined, and yet the doubting person be humble enough, and therefore no heretic for all this pretence. And it should be considered that humility is a duty in great ones as well as in idiots. And as inferiors must not disagree without reason, so neither must superiors prescribe to others without sufficient authority, evidence and necessity too. And if

rebellion be pride, so is tyranny; both may be guilty of pride of understanding, sometimes the one in imposing, sometimes the other in a causeless disagreeing; but in the inferiors it is then only the want of humility, when the guides impose or prescribe what God hath also taught, and then it is the disobeying God's dictates, not man's, that makes the sin. But then this consideration will also intervene, that as no dictate of God obliges men to believe it, unless I know it to be such: so neither will any of the dictates of my superiors, engage my faith, unless I also know, or have no reason to disbelieve, but that they are warranted to teach them to me, therefore, because God hath taught the same to them; which if I once know, or have no reason to think the contrary, if I disagree, my sin is not in resisting human authority but divine. And therefore the whole business of submitting our understanding to human authority, comes to nothing; for either it resolves into the direct duty of submitting to God, or if it be spoken of abstractedly, it is no duty at all.

But this pretence of a necessity of humbling the understanding, is none of the meanest arts whereby some persons have invaded and usurped a power over men's faith and consciences, and therefore we shall examine the pretence afterwards, and try if God hath invested any man or company of men with such a power. In the mean time, he that submits his understanding to all that he knows God hath said, and is ready to submit to all that he hath said if he but know it, denying his own affections and ends, and interests and human persuasions, laying them all down at the foot of his great Master Jesus Christ, that man hath brought his understanding into subjection,

and every proud thought unto the obedience of Christ, and this is the obedience of faith, which is the duty of a Christian.

But to proceed: besides these heresies noted in Scripture, the age of the Apostles, and that which followed, was infested with other heresies; but such as had the same formality and malignity with the precedent, all of them either such as taught practical impieties, or denied an article of the creed. Egesippus in Eusebius reckons seven only prime heresies that sought to deflower the purity of the church: that of Simon, that of Thebutes, of Cleobius, of Dositheus, of Gorthuus, of Masbotheus; I suppose Cerinthus to have been the seventh man, though he express him not: but of these, except the last, we know no particulars; but that Egesippus says, they were false Christs, and that their doctrine was directly against God and his blessed Son. Menander also was the first of a sect, but he bewitched the people with his sorceries. Cerinthus' doctrine pretended enthusiasm or a new revelation, and ended in lust and impious theorems in matter of uncleanness. The Ebionites* denied Christ to be the Son of God, and affirmed him, begot by natural generation, (by occasion of which and the importunity of the Asian bishops, St. John writ his gospel) and taught the observation of Moses' Law. Basilides taught it lawful to renounce the faith, and take false oaths in time of persecution. Carpocrates was a very bedlam, half-witch, and quite madman, and practised lust, which he called the secret operations to overcome the potentates of the world. Some more there were, but of the same

* Vid. Hilar. lib. 1. de Trin.

nature and pest ; not of a nicety in dispute, not a question of secret philosophy, not of atoms, and undiscernable propositions, but open defiances of all faith, of all sobriety, and of all sanctity, excepting only the doctrine of the Millenaries, which in the best ages was esteemed no heresy, but true Catholic doctrine, though since it hath justice done to it, and hath suffered a just condemnation.

Hitherto, and in these instances, the church did esteem and judge of heresies, in proportion to the rules and characters of faith. For faith being a doctrine of piety as well as truth, that which was either destructive of fundamental verity, or of Christian sanctity was against faith, and if it made a sect, was heresy ; if not, it ended in personal impiety, and went no farther. But those who as St. Paul says, not only did such things, but had pleasure in them that do them, and therefore taught others to do what they impiously did dogmatize, they were heretics both in matter and form, in doctrine and deportment towards God and towards man, and judicable in both tribunals.

But the Scripture and apostolical sermons, having expressed most high indignation against these masters of impious sects, leaving them under prodigious characters and horrid representations, as calling them *men of corrupt minds, reprobates concerning the faith, given over to strong delusions to the belief of a lie, false Apostles, false Prophets, men already condemned, and that by themselves, Anti-Christ, enemies of God* ; and heresy itself, *a work of the flesh, excluding from the kingdom of heaven*, left such impressions in the minds of all their successors, and so much zeal against such sects, that if any opinion commenced in the church, not heard of before ; it oftentimes

had this ill luck to run the same fortune with an old heresy. For because the heretics did bring in new opinions in matters of great concernment, every opinion *de novo* brought in was liable to the same exception; and because the degree of malignity in every error was oftentimes undiscernable, and most commonly indemonstrable, their zeal was alike against all; and those ages being full of piety, were fitted to be abused with an over active zeal, as wise persons and learned are with a too much indifferency.

But it came to pass, that the further the succession went from the Apostles, the more forward men were in numbering heresies, and that upon slighter and more uncertain grounds. Some footsteps of this we shall find, if we consider the sects that are said to have sprung in the first three hundred years, and they were pretty and quick in their springs and falls; four score and seven of them are reckoned. They were indeed reckoned afterward, and though when they were alive, they were not condemned with as much forwardness, as after they were dead; yet even then, confidence began to mingle with opinions less necessary, and mistakes in judgment were oftener and more public than they should have been. But if they were forward in their censures, (as sometimes some of them were) it is no great wonder they were deceived. For what principle or criterion had they then to judge of heresies or condemn them, besides the single dictates or decretals of private bishops? for Scripture was indifferently pretended by all; and concerning the meaning of it, was the question: now there was no general council all that while, no opportunity for the church to convene; and if we search the

communicatory letters of the bishops and martyrs in those days, we shall find but few sentences decretory concerning any question of faith or new sprung opinion. And in those that did, for ought appears, the persons were mis-reported, or their opinions mistaken, or at most, the sentence of condemnation was no more but this; such a bishop who hath had the good fortune by posterity to be reputed a Catholic, did condemn such a man or such an opinion, and yet himself erred in as considerable matters, but meeting with better neighbours in his life-time, and a more charitable posterity, hath his memory preserved in honour. It appears plain enough in the case of Nicholas the deacon of Antioch, upon a mistake of his words whereby he taught to abuse the flesh, viz. by acts of austerity and self-denial, and mortification; some wicked people that were glad to be mistaken and abused into a pleasing crime, pretended that he taught them to abuse the flesh by filthy commixtures and pollutions: this mistake was transmitted to posterity with a full cry, and acts afterwards found out to justify an ill opinion of him. For by St. Jerome's time it grew out of question, but that he was the vilest of men, and the worst of heretics:* accusations that while the good man lived were never thought of; for his daughters were virgins, and his sons lived in holy cœlibate all their lives, and himself lived in chaste wedlock, and yet his memory had rotted in perpetual infamy, had not God (in whose sight the memory of the saints is precious) preserved it by the testimony

* Nicolaus Antiocheus, omnium immunditiarum conditor choros duxit fœmineos. Ad. Ctesiph. And again, Iste Nicolaus Diaconus ita immundus extitit ut etiam in præsepi Domini nefas perpetrârit. Epist. de Fabiano lapso.

of Clemens Alexandrinus,* and from him of Eusebius† and Nicephorus. But in the catalogue of heretics made by Philastrius, he stands marked with a black character as guilty of many heresies: by which one testimony we may guess what trust is to be given to those catalogues: well, this good man had the ill luck to fall into unskillful hands at first; but Irenæus, Justin Martyr, Lactantius, (to name no more) had better fortune; for it being still extant in their writings that they were of the Millenary opinion, Papias before, and Nepos after were censured hardly, and the opinion put into the catalogue of heresies, and yet these men never suspected as guilty, but like the children of the captivity walked in the midst of the flame, and not so much as the smell of fire passed on them. But the uncertainty of these things is very memorable, in the story of Eustathius, bishop of Antioch contesting with Eusebius Pamphilus: Eustathius accused Eusebius for going about to corrupt the Nicene creed, of which slander he then acquitted himself, (saith Socrates)‡ and yet he is not cleared by posterity, for still he is suspected, and his fame not clear: however Eusebius then escaped well, but to be quit with his adversary, he recriminates and accuses him to be a favourer of *Sabellius, rather than of the Nicene canons*; an imperfect accusation, God knows, when the crime was a suspicion, provable only by actions capable of divers constructions, and at the most, made but some degrees of probability, and the fact itself did not consist, and therefore was to stand or fall, to be improved or lessened according to the will of the judges, whom in this cause Eustathius by his

* L. 3. Stromat.

† L. 3. c. 26. Hist.

‡ L. 1. c. 23.

ill fortune and a potent adversary found harsh towards him, insomuch that he was for heresy deposed in the synod of Antioch; and though this was laid open in the eye of the world as being most ready at hand, with the greatest ease charged upon every man, and with greatest difficulty acquitted by any man; yet there were other suspicions raised upon him privately, or at least talked of afterwards, and pretended as causes of his deprivation, lest the sentence should seem too hard for the first offence. And yet what they were no man could tell, saith the story. But it is observable what Socrates saith, as in excuse of such proceedings.* “It is the manner among the bishops, when they accuse them that are deposed, they call them wicked, but they publish not the actions of their impiety.” It might possibly be that the bishops did it in tenderness of their reputation, but yet hardly; for to punish a person publicly and highly, is a certain declaring the person punished guilty of a high crime, and then to conceal the fault upon pretence to preserve his reputation, leaves every man at liberty to conjecture what he pleaseth, who possibly will believe it worse than it is, inasmuch as they think his judges so charitable as therefore to conceal the fault, lest the publishing of it should be his greatest punishment, and the scandal greater than his deprivation.† However this course, if it were just in any, was unsafe in all; for it might undo more than it could preserve, and therefore is of

* Τῆτο δε ἐπὶ πάντων εἰώθασι τῶν καταιρεμένων ποιεῖν οἱ ἐπίσκοποι, κατηγοροῦντες μὲν ἢ ἀσεβῆ λέγοντες, τὰς δε αἰτίας τῆς ἀσεβείας ἢ λέγουσι. L. I. c. 24.

† Simpliciter pateat vitium fortasse pusillum, quod tegitur majus creditur esse malum. *Martial.*

more danger, than it can be of charity. It is therefore too probable that the matter was not very fair; for in public sentence, the acts ought to be public. But that they rather pretend heresy to bring their ends about, shews how easy it is to impute that crime, and how forward they were to do it: and that they might, and did then, as easily call heretic as afterward, when Vigilius was condemned of heresy for saying there were antipodes; or as the friars of late did, who suspected Greek and Hebrew of heresy, and called their professors heretics, and had like to have put Terence and Demosthenes into the *Index Expurgatorius*; sure enough they railed at them, therefore, because they understood them not, and had reason to believe they would accidentally be enemies to their reputation among the people.

By this instance which was a while after the Nicene council, where the acts of the church were regular, judicial and orderly, we may guess at the sentences passed upon heresy, at such times and in such cases, when their process was more private, and their acts more tumultuary, their information less certain, and therefore their mistakes more easy and frequent. And it is remarkable in the case of the heresy of Montanus, the scene of whose heresy lay within the first three hundred years, though it was represented in the catalogues afterwards, and possibly the mistake concerning it, is to be put upon the score of Epiphanius, by whom Montanus and his followers were put into the catalogue of heretics for commanding abstinence from meats, as if they were unclean, and of themselves unlawful. Now the truth was, Montanus said no such thing, but commanded frequent abstinence, enjoined dry

diet, and an ascetic table, not for conscience sake, but for discipline; and yet because he did this with too much rigour and strictness of mandate, the primitive church disliked it in him, as being too near their error, who by a judaical superstition abstained from meats as from uncleanness. This by the way will much concern them who place too much sanctity in such rites and acts of discipline; for it is an eternal rule and of never failing truth, that such abstinences, if they be obtruded as acts of original, immediate duty and sanctity, are unlawful and superstitious. If they be for discipline they may be good, but of no very great profit; it is that bodily exercise which St. Paul says, profiteth but little; and just in the same degree, the primitive church esteemed them; for they therefore reprehended Montanus, for urging such abstinences with too much earnestness, though but in the way of discipline, for that it was no more, Tertullian, who was himself a Montanist, and knew best the opinions of his own sect, testifies; and yet Epiphanius reporting the errors of Montanus, commends that which Montanus truly and really taught, and which the primitive church condemned in him, and therefore represents that heresy in another sense, and affixes that to Montanus, which Epiphanius believed a heresy, and yet which Montanus did not teach. And this also among many other things lessens my opinion very much of the integrity or discretion of the old catalogues of heretics, and much abates my confidence towards them.

And now that I have mentioned them casually in passing by, I shall give a short account of them; for men are much mistaken; some in their opinions concerning the truth of them; as

believing them to be all true, some concerning their purpose as thinking them sufficient not only to condemn all those opinions, there called heretical; but to be a precedent to all ages of the church to be free and forward in calling heretic. But he that considers the catalogues themselves, as they are collected by Epiphanius, Philastrius, and St. Austin, shall find that many are reckoned for heretics for opinions in matters disputable, and undetermined, and of no consequence; and that in these catalogues of heretics there are men numbered for heretics, which by every side respectively are acquitted; so that there is no company of men in the world that admit these catalogues as good records, or sufficient sentences of condemnation. For the churches of the Reformation, I am certain, they acquit Aërius for denying prayer for the dead, and the Eustathians for denying invocation of Saints. And I am partly of opinion, that the church of Rome is not willing to call the Collyridians heretics, for offering a cake to the Virgin Mary, unless she also will run the hazard of the same sentence for offering candles to her: and that they will be glad with St. Austin, (*l. 6. de hæres. c. 86.*) to excuse the Tertullianists for picturing God in a visible corporal representment.* And yet these sects are put in the black book by Epiphanius and St. Austin, and Isidore respectively. I remember also, that the Ossenii are called heretics, because they refused to worship toward the East; and yet in that dissent, I find not the malignity of a heresy, nor any thing against an article of faith or good manners; and it being only in circumstance, it

* D. Thom. 1. contr. gent. c. 21.

were hard, if they were otherwise pious men and true believers, to send them to hell for such a trifle. The Parermeneutæ refused to follow other men's dictates like sheep, but would expound Scripture according to the best evidence themselves could find, and yet were called heretics, whether they expounded true or no. The Pauliciani* for being offended at crosses, the Proclians for saying in a regenerate man, all his sins were not quite dead, but only curbed and assuaged, were called heretics, and so condemned; for ought I know, for affirming that which all pious men feel in themselves to be too true. And he that will consider how numerous the catalogues are, and to what a volume they are come in their last collections, to no less than five hundred and twenty, (for so many heresies and heretics are reckoned by Prateolus) may think that if a retrenchment were justly made of truths, and all impertinencies, and all opinions, either still disputable, or less considerable, the number would much decrease; and therefore, that the catalogues are much amiss, and the name heretic is made a *terriculamentum*, (a bugbear) to affright people from their belief, or to discountenance the persons of men, and disrepute them, that their schools may be empty and their disciples few.

So that I shall not need to instance how that some men were called heretics by Philastrius, for rejecting the translation of the LXX. and following the Bible of Aquila, wherein the great faults mentioned by Philastrius, are, that he translates Χριστὸν Θεός, not *Christum*, but *unctum Dei*, the anointed of God; and instead of *Emanuel*, writes

* Euthym. part. 1. tit. 21. Epiphani. hæres. 64.

Deus nobiscum, God with us. But this most concerns them of the primitive church, with whom the translation of Aquila was in great reputation,* It was supposed he was a greater clerk, and understood more than ordinary; it may be so, he did: but whether yea or no, yet since the other translators by the confession of Philastrius, *quædam prætermisisse necessitate urgente cogèrentur*, when compelled by urgent necessity did pass by some things, if some wise men or unwise did follow a translator who understood the original well, (for so Aquila had learnt among the Jews) it was hard to call men heretics for following his translation, especially since the other bibles (which were thought to have in them contradictories; and it was confessed, had omitted some things) were excused by necessity: and the others necessity of following Aquila, when they had no better, was not at all considered, nor a less crime than heresy laid upon their score†. Such another was the heresy of the Quartodecimani; for the Easterlings were all proclaimed heretics for keeping Easter after the manner of the East; and as Socrates and Nicephorus report, the bishop of Rome was very forward to excommunicate all the bishops of the lesser Asia, for observing the feast according to the tradition of their ancestors, though they did it modestly, quietly, and without faction; and although they pretended, and were as well able to prove their tradition from St. John, of so observing it, as the western church could prove their tradition derivative from St. Peter and

* *Is enim veluti plus à quibusdam intellexisse laudatur.*

† Philastr. 99. eos inter hæreticos numerat qui spiraculum vitæ in libro Genes. interpretantur animam rationalem, et non potiùs gratiam Spiritus sancti.

St. Paul. If such things as these make up the catalogues of heretics, (as we see they did) their accounts differ from the precedents they ought to have followed, that is, the censurés apostolical, and therefore are unsafe precedents for us; and unless they took the liberty of using the word *heresy*, in a lower sense, than the world now doth, since the councils have been forward in pronouncing anathema, and took it only for a distinct sense, and a differing persuasion in matters of opinion and minute articles, we cannot excuse the persons of the men: but if they intended the crime of heresy against those opinions as they laid them down in their catalogues, that crime (I say) which is a work of the flesh, which excludes from the kingdom of heaven; all that I shall say against them, is, that the causeless curse shall return empty, and no man is damned the sooner, because his enemy cries *oh! accursed!* and they that were the judges and accusers might err as well as the persons accused, and might need as charitable construction of their opinions and practices as the other. And of this we are sure they had no warrant from any rule of Scripture, or practice apostolical, for driving so furiously and hastily in such decreetory sentences. But I am willing rather to believe their sense of the word *heresy*, was more gentle than with us it is, and for that they might have warrant from Scripture.

But by the way, I observe that although these catalogues are a great instance to shew that they whose age and spirits were far distant from the Apostles, had also other judgments concerning faith and heresy, than the Apostles had, and the ages apostolical; yet these catalogues although they are reports of heresies in the second and

third ages, are not to be put upon the account of those ages, nor to be reckoned as an instance of their judgment, which although it was in some degrees more culpable than that of their predecessors, yet in respect of the following ages it was innocent and modest. But these catalogues I speak of, were set down according to the sense of the then present ages, in which as they in all probability did differ from the apprehensions of the former centuries, so it is certain, there were differing learnings, other fancies, divers representations and judgments of men depending upon circumstances which the first ages knew, and the following ages did not; and therefore the catalogues were drawn with some truth, but less certainty, as appears in their differing about the authors of some heresies. Several opinions imputed to the same, and some put in the roll of heretics by one, which the other left out; which to me is an argument that the collectors were determined, not by the sense and sentences of the three first ages, but by themselves, and some circumstances about them, which to reckon for heretics, which not. And that they themselves were the prime judges, or perhaps some in their own age together with them; but there was not any sufficient external judicatory, competent to declare heresy, that by any public or sufficient sentence or acts of court had furnished them with warrant for their catalogues. And therefore, they are no argument sufficient that the first ages of the church, which certainly were the best, did much recede from that which I shewed to be the sense of the Scripture, and the practice of the Apostles; they all contented themselves with the Apostles' creed, as the rule of the faith; and therefore were not forward

to judge of heresy, but by analogy to their rule of faith: and those catalogues made after these ages are not sufficient arguments that they did otherwise, but rather of the weakness of some persons, or of the spirit and genius of the age in which the compilers lived, in which the device of calling all differing opinions by the name of heresies, might grow to be a design to serve ends and to promote interests, as often as an act of zeal and just indignation against evil persons, destroyers of the faith and corrupters of manners.

For whatever private mens' opinions were, yet till the Nicene council, the rule of faith was entire in the Apostles creed, and provided they retained that easily, they broke not the unity of faith, however differing opinions might possibly commence in such things in which a liberty were better suffered than prohibited with a breach of charity. And this appears exactly in the question between St. Cyprian of Carthage and Stephen, bishop of Rome, in which one instance it is easy to see what was lawful and safe for a wise and good man, and yet how others began even then to be abused by that temptation, which since hath invaded all Christendom. St. Cyprian re-baptised heretics, and thought he was bound so to do; calls a synod in Africa as being metropolitan, and confirms his opinion by the consent of his suffragans and brethren, but still with so much modesty, that if any man was of another opinion, he judged him not, but gave him that liberty that he desired himself; Stephen, bishop of Rome grows angry, excommunicates the bishops of Asia and Africa, that in divers synods had consented to re-baptization, and without peace, and without charity, condemns them for heretics. Indeed here was the rarest

mixture and conjunction of unlikelihoods that I have observed. Here was error of opinion with much modesty and sweetness of temper on one side, and on the other, an over-active and impetuous zeal to attest a truth. It uses not to be so, for error usually is supported with confidence, and truth suppressed and discountenanced by indifference. But that it might appear that the error was not the sin, but the uncharitableness, Stephen was accounted a zealous and furious person, and St. Cyprian though deceived, yet a very good man, and of great sanctity.* For although every error is to be opposed, yet according to the variety of errors, so is there variety of proceedings. If it be against faith, that is, a destruction of any part of the foundation, it is with zeal to be resisted, and we have for it an apostolical warrant, *contend earnestly for the faith*; but then as these things recede farther from the foundation, our certainty is the less, and their necessity not so much, and therefore it were very fit that our confidence should be according to our evidence, and our zeal according to our confidence, and our confidence should then be the rule of our communion, and the lightness of an article should be considered with the weight of a precept of charity. And therefore, there are some errors to be reprov'd, rather by a private friend than a public censure, and the persons of the men not avoided but admonished, and their doctrine rejected, not their communion; few opinions are of that malignity which are to be rejected with the same exterminating spirit and confidence of aversion with which the first teachers of Christianity

* Vid. S. Aug. l. 2. c. 6. de baptis. contra Donat.

condemned Ebion, Manes, and Cerinthus; and in the condemnation of heretics, the personal iniquity is more considerable than the obliquity of the doctrine, not for the rejection of the article, but for censuring the persons; and therefore it is the piety of the man that excused St. Cyprian, which is a certain argument that it is not the opinion but the impiety that condemns and makes the heretic. And this was it which Vincentius Lirinensis said in this very case of St. Cyprian.* “Strange as it must appear, we judge the Catholic authors and the heretics that followed to be of one and the same opinion. We excuse the master, we condemn the scholars. Those who wrote the books are the inheritors of heaven, while the defenders of these very books are thrust down to hell.”† Which saying, if we confront against the saying of Salvian condemning the first authors of the Arian sect, and acquitting the followers, we are taught by these two wise men, that an error is not it that sends a man to hell; but he that begins the heresy, and is the author of the sect, he is the man marked out to ruin, and his followers escaped, when the heresiarch commenced the error upon pride and ambition, and his followers went after him in simplicity of their heart; and so it was most commonly: but on the contrary, when the first man in the opinion was honestly and invincibly deceived, as St. Cyprian was, and that his scholars to maintain their credit or their ends, maintained the opinion, not for the excel-

* Adv. hæres. c. 11.

† Unius et ejusdem opinionis (mirum videri potest) judicamus authores Catholicos, et sequaces hæreticos. Excusamus magistros, et condemnamus scholasticos. Qui scripserunt libros sunt hæredes cœli, quorum librorum defensores detruduntur ad infernum.

lency of the reason persuading, but for the benefit and accruments, or peevishness, as did the Donatists, *qui de Cypriani autoritate sibi carnaliter blandiuntur*, as St. Austin said of them; then the scholars are the heretics, and the master is a catholic. For his error is not the heresy formally, and an erring person may be a catholic. A wicked person in his error becomes heretic, when the good man in the same error shall have all the rewards of faith. For whatever an ill man believes, if he therefore believe it, because it serves his own ends, be his belief true or false, the man hath an heretical mind, for to serve his own ends, his mind is prepared to believe a lie. But a good man that believes what according to his light, and upon the use of his moral industry he thinks true, whether he hits upon the right or no, because he hath a mind desirous of truth, and prepared to believe every truth, is therefore acceptable to God, because nothing hindered him from it but what he could not help, his misery and his weakness, which being imperfections merely natural, which God never punishes, he stands fair for a blessing of his morality, which God always accepts. So that now if Stephen had followed the example of God Almighty, or retained but the same peaceable spirit which his brother of Carthage did, he might with more advantage to truth and reputation both of wisdom and piety have done his duty in attesting what he believed to be true; for we are as much bound to be zealous pursuers of peace as earnest contenders for the faith. I am sure more earnest we ought to be for the peace of the church, than for an article which is not of the faith, as this question of re-baptization was not, for St. Cyprian died in belief

against it, and yet was a catholic, and a martyr for the Christian faith.

The sum is this, St. Cyprian did right in a wrong cause, (as it hath been since judged) and Stephen did ill in a good cause; as far then as piety and charity is to be preferred before a true opinion, so far is St. Cyprian's practice a better precedent for us, and an example of primitive sanctity, than the zeal and indiscretion of Stephen: St. Cyprian had not learned to forbid to any one a Liberty of Prophesying or Interpretation, if he transgressed not the foundation of faith and the creed of the Apostles.

Well, thus it was, and thus it ought to be in the first ages, the faith of Christendom rested still upon the same foundation, and the judgments of heresies were accordingly, or were amiss; but the first great violation of this truth was, when general councils came in, and the symbols were enlarged, and new articles were made as much of necessity to be believed as the creed of the Apostles, and damnation threatened to them that did dissent, and at last the creeds multiplied in number and in articles, and the Liberty of Prophesying began to be something restrained.

And this was of so much the more force and efficacy because it began upon great reason, and in the first instance, with success good enough. For I am much pleased with the enlarging of the creed, which the council of Nice made, because they enlarged it to my sense; but I am not sure that others are satisfied with it; while we look upon the article they did determine, we see all things well enough; but there are some wise personages consider it in all circumstances, and think the church had been more happy if she had

not been in some sense constrained to alter the simplicity of her faith, and make it more curious and articulate, so much that he had need be a subtle man to understand the very words of the new determinations.

For the first Alexander bishop of Alexandria, in the presence of his clergy, entreats somewhat more curiously of the secret of the mysterious Trinity and Unity; so curiously, that Arius* (who was a sophister too subtle as it afterward appeared) misunderstood him, and thought he intended to bring in the heresy of Sabellius. For while he taught the Unity of the Trinity, either he did it so inartificially or so intricately, that Arius thought he did not distinguish the persons, when the bishop intended only the unity of nature. Against this Arius furiously drives, and to confute Sabellius, and in him (as he thought) the bishop, distinguishes the natures too, and so to secure the article of the Trinity, destroys the Unity. It was the first time the question was disputed in the world, and in such mysterious niceties, possibly every wise man may understand something, but few can understand all, and therefore suspect what they understand not, and are furiously zealous for that part of it which they do perceive. Well, it happened in these as always in such cases, in things men understand not they are most impetuous; and because suspicion is a thing infinite in degrees, for it hath nothing to determine it, a suspicious person is ever most violent, for his fears are worse than the thing feared, because the thing is limited, but his fears are not†; so that upon this grew contentions on both sides, and tumults, railing and

* Socra. l. 1. c. 8.

† Lib. l.c. 6.

reviling each other ; and then the laity were drawn into parts, and the Meletians abetted the wrong part, and the right part fearing to be overborn, did any thing that was next at hand to secure itself. Now then they that lived in that age, that understood the men, that saw how quiet the church was before this stir, how miserably rent now, what little benefit from the question, what schism about it, gave other censures of the business than we since have done, who only look upon the article determined with truth and approbation of the church generally since that time. But the epistle of Constantine to Alexander and Arius,* tells the truth, and chides them both for commencing the question, Alexander for broaching it, Arius for taking it up ; and although this be true, that it had been better for the church it never had begun, yet being begun, what is to be done in it ? Of this also in that admirable epistle, we have the Emperor's judgment (I suppose not without the advise and privity of Hosius, bishop of Corduba, whom the Emperor loved and trusted much, and employed in the delivery of the letters.) For first he calls it “ a certain vain piece of a question, ill begun and more unadvisedly published, a question which no law or ecclesiastical canon defineth, a fruitless contention, the product of idle brains, a matter so nice, so obscure, so intricate, that it was neither to be explicated by the clergy, nor understood by the people, a dispute of words, a doctrine inexplicable, but most dangerous when taught, least it introduce discord or blasphemy ; and, therefore, the objector was rash, and the answerer unadvised ;

* Cap. 7.

for it concerned not the substance of faith or the worship of God, nor any chief commandment of Scripture, and therefore, why should it be the matter of discord? For though the matter be grave, yet because neither necessary nor explicable, the contention is trifling and toyish. And therefore, as the philosophers of the same sect, though differing in explication of an opinion, yet more love for the unity of their profession, than disagree for the difference of opinion; so should Christians believing in the same God, retaining the same faith, having the same hopes, opposed by the same enemies, not fall at variance upon such disputes, considering our understandings are not all alike, and therefore, neither can our opinions in such mysterious articles: so that the matter being of no great importance, but vain, and a toy in respect of the excellent blessings of peace and charity, it were good that Alexander and Arius should leave contending, keep their opinions to themselves, ask each other forgiveness, and give mutual toleration." This is the substance of Constantine's letter, and it contains in it much reason, if he did not undervalue the question; but it seems it was not then thought a question of faith, but of nicety of dispute; they both did believe one God and the Holy Trinity. Now then that he afterward called the Nicene council, it was upon occasion of the vileness of the men of the Arian part, their eternal discord and pertinacious wrangling, and to bring peace into the church, that was the necessity; and in order to it was the determination of the article. But for the article itself, the letter declares what opinion he had of that, and this letter was by Socrates called *a wonderful*

exhortation, full of grace and sober counsels ; and such as Hosius himself, who was the messenger, pressed with all earnestness, with all the skill and authority he had.

I know the opinion the world had of the article afterward is quite differing from this censure given of it before ; and therefore they have put it into the creed (I suppose) to bring the world to unity, and to prevent sedition in this question, and the accidental blasphemies, which were occasioned by their curious talkings of such secret mysteries, and by their illiterate resolutions. But although the article was determined with an excellent spirit, and we all with much reason profess to believe it ; yet it is another consideration, whether or no it might not have been better determined, if with more simplicity ; and another yet, whether or no since many of the bishops who did believe this thing, yet did not like the nicety and curiosity of expressing it, it had not been more agreeable to the practice of the Apostles to have made a determination of the article by way of exposition of the Apostles creed, and to have left this in a rescript, for record to all posterity, and not to have enlarged the creed with it ; for since it was an explication of an article of the creed of the Apostles, as sermons are of places of Scripture, it was thought by some, that Scripture might with good profit, and great truth be expounded, and yet the expositions not put into the canon or go for Scripture, but that left still in the naked original simplicity, and so much the rather since that explication was further from the foundation, and though most certainly true, yet not penned by so infallible a spirit, as was that of the Apostles ; and therefore not with so much evidence, as

certainty. And if they had pleased, they might have made use of an admirable precedent to this and many other great and good purposes, no less than of the blessed Apostles, whose symbol they might have imitated, with as much simplicity as they did the expressions of Scripture, when they first composed it. For it is most considerable, that although in reason, every clause in the creed should be clear, and so inopportune and unapt to variety of interpretation, that there might be no place left for several senses or variety of expositions: yet when they thought fit to insert some mysteries into the creed, which in Scripture were expressed in so mysterious words, that the last and most explicit sense would still be latent, yet they who (if ever any did) understood all the senses and secrets of it, thought it not fit to use any words but the words of Scripture, particularly in the articles of Christ's descending into hell, and sitting at the right hand of God, to shew us, that those creeds are best which keep the very words of Scripture; and that faith is best which hath greatest simplicity; and that it is better in all cases humbly to submit, than curiously to enquire and pry into the mystery under the cloud, and to hazard our faith by improving our knowledge: if the Nicene Fathers had done so, possibly the church would never have repented it.

And indeed the experience the church had afterwards, shewed that the bishops and priests were not satisfied in all circumstances, nor the schism appeased, nor the persons agreed, nor the canons accepted, nor the article understood, nor any thing right, but when they were overborn with authority, which authority when the scales turned, did the same service and promotion to the contrary.

But it is considerable, that it was not the article or the thing itself that troubled the disagreeing persons, but the manner of representing it. For the five dissenters, Eusebius of Nicomedia, Theognis, Maris, Theonas, and Secundus, believed Christ to be the very God of very God, but the clause of *ὁμοῦσιος* they derided as being persuaded by their logic, that he was neither of the substance of the Father, by division as a piece of a lump, nor derivation as children from their parents, nor by production as buds from trees, and nobody could tell them any other way at that time, and that made the fire to burn still. And that was as I said, if the article had been with more simplicity, and less nicety determined, charity would have gained more, and faith would have lost nothing. And we shall find the wisest of them all, for so Eusebius Pamphilus* was esteemed, published a creed or confession in the synod, and though he and all the rest believed that great mystery of godliness, *God manifested in the flesh*, yet he was not fully satisfied, nor so soon of the clause of *one substance*, till he had done a little violence to his own understanding; for even when he had subscribed to the clause of *one substance*, he does it with a protestation, that *heretofore he never had been acquainted, nor accustomed himself to such speeches*. And the sense of the word was either so ambiguous, or the meaning so uncertain, that Andreas Fricius† does with some probability dispute that the Nicene Fathers by *ὁμοῦσιος*, did mean *likeness*, not *unity of essence* with the Father,‡ and it was so well understood by personages disinterested, that when Arius and Euzoius had

* Vide Sozomen. lib. 2. c. 18.

† Socrat. lib. 1. cap. 26.

‡ Patris similitudinem, non essentiae unitatem.

confessed Christ to be *Deus verbum*, without inserting the clause of *one substance*, the emperor by his letter approved of his faith, and restored him to his country and office, and the communion of the church. And a long time after, although the article was believed with nicety enough *, yet when they added more words still to the mystery, and brought in the word *ὑπόστασις*, (hypostasis) saying there were three hypostases in the holy Trinity, it was so long before it could be understood, that it was believed therefore, because they would not expose their superiors, or disturb the peace of the church, in things which they thought could not be understood †.

But without all question, the fathers determined the question with much truth, though I cannot say, the arguments upon which they build their decrees, were so good as the conclusion itself was certain ; but that which in this case is considerable, is whether or no they did well in putting a curse to their decree, and the decree itself into the

* It was no injudicious application that some one made of the saying of Ariston the philosopher, to this mystery, “ Black hellebore cleanses and heals if it be taken in a state of consistence ; but when bruised and broken in pieces it suffocates.” Non imprudenter dixit, qui curiosæ explicationi hujus mysterii dictum Aristonis Philosophi applicuit, Helleborus niger si crassius sumatur purgat et sanat. Quum autem territur et comminuitur, suffocat. Anon.

† Pray determine, for I shall not hesitate to speak of three hypostases, if you command me. Discerne si placet obsecro, non timebo tres hypostases dicere, si jubetis ; and again, I implore thee by the Saviour of the World and the united Trinity, that thou wouldst authorize me by thy letters either to be silent or to speak on the subject of the hypostasis. Obtestor beatitudinem tuam per Crucifixum, mundi salutem, per *ὑποστάσιον* Trinitatem, ut mihi Epistolis tuis, sive tacendarem sive dicendarum hypostaseôn detur autoritas. St. Hierom to Damasus.

symbol, as if it had been of the same necessity? For the curse, Eusebius Pamphilus could hardly find in his heart to subscribe, at last he did; but with this clause, that he subscribed it because the form of curse did only *forbid men to acquaint themselves with foreign speeches and unwritten languages*, whereby confusion and discord is brought into the church. So that it was not so much a magisterial high assertion of the article, as an endeavour to secure the peace of the church. And to the same purpose for ought I know, the fathers composed a form of confession, not a prescript rule of faith to build the hopes of our salvation on, but a *tessera* of that communion which by public authority was therefore established upon those articles, because the articles were true, though not of prime necessity, and because that unity of confession was judged, as things then stood, the best preserver of the unity of minds.

But I shall observe this, that although the Nicene Fathers in that case at that time, and in that conjuncture of circumstances did well (and yet their approbation is made by after ages *ex post facto*) yet if this precedent had been followed by all councils (and certainly they had equal power, if they had thought it equally reasonable) and that they had put all their decrees into the creed, as some have done since, to what a volume had the creed by this time swelled? and all the house had run into foundation, nothing left for superstructures. But that they did not, it appears; first, that since they thought all their decrees true, yet they did not think them necessary, at least not in that degree, and that they published such decrees, they did it declaratively, not imperatively, as doctors in their chairs, not mas-

ters of other men's faith and conscience. Secondly, and yet there is some more modesty, or wariness or necessity (what shall I call it?) than this comes too: for why are not all controversies determined? But even when general assemblies of prelates have been, some controversies that have been very vexatious, have been pretermitted, and others of less consequence have been determined. Why did never any general council condemn in express sentence the Pelagian heresy, that great pest, that subtle infection of Christendom? and yet divers general councils did assemble while the heresy was in the world. Both these cases in several degrees leave men in their Liberty of believing and Prophesying. The latter proclaims that all controversies cannot be determined to suppose, and the first declares that those that are, are not all of them matters of faith, and themselves are not so secure, but they may be deceived; and therefore possibly it were better it were let alone; for if the latter leaves them divided in their opinions, yet their communions, and therefore probably their charities are not divided; but the former divides their communions, and hinders their interest; and yet for ought is certain, the accused person is the better catholic. And yet after all this, it is not safety enough to say, let the council or prelates determine articles warily, seldom, with great caution, and with much sweetness and modesty. For though this be better than to do it rashly, frequently and furiously, yet if we once transgress the bounds set us by the Apostles in the creed, and not only preach other truths, but determine them *pro tribunali* as well as *pro cathedra*, although there be no error in the subject matter (as in Nice there was none)

yet if the next ages say they will determine another article with as much care and caution, and pretend as great a necessity, there is no hindering them, but by giving reasons against it; and so like enough they might have done against the decreeing the article at Nice; yet that is not sufficient; for since the authority of the Nicene council hath grown to the height of a mountainous prejudice against him that should say it was ill done, the same reason and the same necessity may be pretended by any age and in any council, and they think themselves warranted by the great precedent at Nice, to proceed as peremptorily as they did; but then if any other assembly of learned men may possibly be deceived, were it not better they should spare the labour, than that they should with so great pomp and solemnities engage men's persuasions, and determine an article which after ages must rescind? For therefore most certainly in their own age, the point with safety of faith and salvation, might have been disputed and disbelieved: and that many men's faiths have been tied up by acts and decrees of councils for those articles in which the next age did see a liberty had better been preserved, because an error was determined, we shall afterward receive a more certain account.

And therefore the council of Nice did well, and Constantinople did well, so did Ephesus and Chalcedon; but it is because the articles were truly determined (for that is part of my belief;) and who is sure it should be so before hand, and whether the points there determined were necessary or no to be believed or to be determined? If peace had been concerned in it through the faction and division of the parties, I suppose the judgment of

Constantine the emperor, and the famous Hosius of Corduba is sufficient to instruct us, whose authority I rather urge than reasons, because it is a prejudice and not a reason I am to contend against.

So that such determinations and publishing of confessions with authority of prince and bishop, are sometimes of very good use for the peace of the church, and they are good also to determine the judgment of indifferent persons, whose reasons of either side, are not too great to weigh down the probability of that authority : but for persons of confident and imperious understandings, they on whose side the determination is, are armed with a prejudice against the other, and with a weapon to affront them, but with no more to convince them ; and they against whom the decision is, do the more readily betake themselves to the defensive, and are engaged upon contestation and public enmities, for such articles which either might safely be unknown, or with much charity disputed. Therefore the Nicene council, although it have the advantage of an acquired and prescribing authority, yet it must not become a precedent to others, lest the inconveniences of multiplying more articles upon as great pretence of reason as then, make the act of the Nicene Fathers in straitening prophesying, and enlarging the creed, become accidentally an inconvenience. The first restraint, although if it had been complained of, might possibly have been better considered of ; yet the inconvenience is not visible, till it comes by way of precedent to usher in more. It is like an arbitrary power, which although by the same reason it take sixpence from the subject, it may take a hundred pounds, and

then a thousand, and then all, yet so long as it is within bounds, the inconvenience is not so great; but when it comes to be a precedent or argument for more, then the first may justly be complained of, as having in it that reason in the principle, which brought the inconvenience in the sequel; and we have seen very ill consequences from innocent beginnings.

And the inconveniences which might possibly arise from this precedent, those wise personages also did foresee, and therefore although they took liberty in Nice to add some articles, or at least more explicitly to declare the first creed, yet they then would have all the world to rest upon that and go no farther, as believing that to be sufficient. St. Athanasius declares their opinion ἡ, γὰρ ἐν αὐτῇ πρᾶ ἀ τῶν πατέρων κατὰ τὰς θείας γραφὰς, ὁμολογηθεῖσα πίστις, ἀντάρκης ἐστὶ πρὸς ἀνατροπὴν μεταπάσης ἀσεβείας, συστάσιν δὲ τῆς ἁσεβείας ἐν Χριστῷ πίστεως*. “That faith which those fathers there confessed, was sufficient for the refutation of all impiety, and the establishment of all faith in Christ and true religion.” And therefore there was a famous epistle written by Zeno the emperor, called the Ἐνωτικὸν or the epistle of reconciliation,† in which all disagreeing interests, are entreated to agree in the Nicene symbol, and a promise made upon that condition to communicate with all other sects, adding withal, that the church should never receive any other symbol than that which was composed by the Nicene Fathers. And however Honorius was condemned for a Monothelite; yet in one of the epistles which the sixth synod alledged against him, (viz. the second) he gave

* Epist. ad Epict.

† Fuagr. l. 3. c. 14.

them counsel that would have done the church as much service as the determination of the article did ; for he advised them not to be curious in their disputings, nor dogmatical in their determinations about that question ; and because the church was not used to dispute in that question, it were better to preserve the simplicity of faith, than to ensnare men's consciences by a new article. And when the emperor Constantius was by his faction engaged in a contrary practice, the inconvenience and unreasonableness was so great, that a prudent heathen observed and noted it in this character of Constantius,* “ That he mixed the Christian religion, complete and simple in itself with a weak and foolish superstition, perplexing to examine, and useless to form ; and he excited dissensions which were widely diffused, and which promised to be a war of words, whilst he endeavoured to regulate every sacred rite by his own will.”

And yet men are more led by example than either by reason or by precept ; for in the council of Constantinople one article new and entire was added, viz. *I believe one baptism for the remission of sins* ; and then again they were so confident, that that confession of faith was so absolutely entire, and that no man ever after should need to add any thing to the integrity of faith, that the fathers of the council of Ephesus pronounced anathema to all those that should add any thing to the creed of Constantinople. And yet for all this, the church of Rome in a synod at

* Christianam religionem absolutam et simplicem (N. B.) anili superstitione confudit. In quâ scrutandâ perplexiûs quam in componendâ gratiûs, excitavit dissidia quæ progressa fusiûs aluit concertatione verborum dùm ritum omnem ad suum trahere conatur arbitrium.

Gentilly, added the clause of Filioque to the article of the profession of the Holy Ghost, and what they have done since, all the world knows, *Exemplæ non consistunt, sed quamvis in tenuem recepta tramitem, latissimè evagandi sibi faciunt potestatem.* All men were persuaded that it was most reasonable the limits of faith should be no more enlarged; but yet they enlarged it themselves, and bound others from doing it, like an intemperate father, who, because he knows he does ill himself, enjoins temperance to his son, but continues to be intemperate himself.

But now if I should be questioned concerning the symbol of Athanasius, (for we see the Nicene symbol was the father of many more, some twelve or thirteen symbols in the space of a hundred years) I confess I cannot see that moderate sentence and gentleness of charity in his preface and conclusion as there was in the Nicene creed. Nothing there but damnation and perishing everlastingly, unless the article of the Trinity be believed, as it is there with curiosity and minute particularities explained. Indeed Athanasius had been soundly vexed on one side, and much cried up on the other, and therefore it is not so much wonder for him to be so decretory and severe in his censure, for nothing could more ascertain his friends to him and disrepute his enemies, than the belief of that damnatory appendix, but that does not justify the thing. For the articles themselves, I am most heartily persuaded of the truth of them, and yet I dare not say all that are not so, are irrevocably damned, because *citra hoc symbolum*, the faith of the Apostles creed is entire, and he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, that is, he that believeth such a belief as is sufficient disposi-

tion to be baptised, that faith with the sacrament is sufficient for heaven. Now the Apostles creed does one; why therefore do not both entitle us to the promise? Besides, if it were considered concerning Athanasius' creed, how many people understand it not, how contrary to natural reason it seems, how little the Scripture* says of those curiosities of explication, and how tradition was not clear on his side for the article itself, much less for those forms and minutes, how himself is put to make an answer and excuse for the Fathers† speaking in favour of the Arians, at least so seemingly, that the Arians appealed to them for trial, and the offer was declined, and after all this that the Nicene creed itself went not so far, neither in article, nor anathema, nor explication; it had not been amiss if the final judgment had been left to Jesus Christ, for he is appointed Judge of all the World, and he shall judge the people righteously, for he knows every truth, the degree of every necessity, and all excuses that do lessen or take away the nature or malice of a crime; all which I think Athanasius, though a very good man, did not know so well as to warrant such a sentence. And put the case, that the heresy there condemned be damnable, (as it is damnable enough) yet a man may maintain an opinion that is in itself damnable, and yet he not knowing it

* Vide Hosum de author. S. Scrip. l. 3. p. 53. & Gordon. Huntlaum. tom. 1. contr. l. de verbo Dei, cap. 19.

† Vide Gretser. & Tanner. in coloq. Ratisbon. Eusebium fuisse Arianum ait Perron. lib. 3. cap. 2. contre le Roy Iagues. Idem ait Originem negasse Divinitatem filii & Spir. S. l. 2. c. 7. de Euchar. contra. Duplessis. idem cap. 5. observ. 4. ait. Irænaum talia dixisse quæ qui hodiè diceret, pro Ariano reputaretur. vide etiam Fisher. in resp. ad 9. Quæst. Iacobi Reg. & Epiphani. in hæres. 69.

so, and being invincibly led into it may go to heaven; his opinion shall burn and himself be saved. But however, I find no opinions in Scripture called damnable, but what are impious *in materiâ practică*, or directly destructive of the faith or the body of Christianity, such of which St. Peter speaks; *bringing in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, these are the false prophets, who out of covetousness make merchandize of you through cozening words.** Such as these are truly heresies, and such as these are certainly damnable. But because there are no degrees either of truth or falsehood, every true proposition being alike true; that an error is more or less damnable, is not told us in Scripture, but is determined by the man and his manners, by circumstance and accidents, and therefore the censure in the preface and end, are arguments of his zeal and strength of his persuasion, but they are extrinsical and accidental to the articles, and might as well have been spared. And indeed to me it seems very hard to put uncharitableness into the creed, and so to make it become as an article of faith, though perhaps this very thing was no faith of Athanasius, who if we may believe Aquinas, made this manifestation of faith, *non per modum symboli, sed per modum doctrinæ*,† that is, if I understood him right, not with a purpose to impose it upon others, but with confidence to declare his own belief; and that it was prescribed to others as a creed, was the act of the bishops of Rome; so he said, nay, possibly it was none of his: so said the patriarch of C. P.

* 2 Pet. 2. 1.

† D. Tho. 22æ. q. 1. artic. 1. ad 3um.

Meletius, about one hundred and thirty years since, in his epistle to John Douza, "We do not scruple plainly to protest that the creed is falsely ascribed to Athanasius, which was corrupted by the Roman Pontiff." *Athanasio falso adscriptum symbolum cum Pontificum Rom. appendice illâ adulteratum, luce lucidiùs contestamur.* And it is more than probable that he said true, because this creed was written originally in Latin, which in all reason Athanasius did not, and it was translated into Greek, it being apparent that the Latin copy is but one, but the Greek is various, there being three editions or translations rather, expressed by Genebrard, *lib. 3. de Trinit.* But in this particular, who list, may better satisfy himself in a disputation *de symbolo Athanasii*, printed at Wertzburg, 1590, supposed to be written by Serrarius or Cleneherus.

And yet I must observe that this symbol of Athanasius, and that other of Nice, offer not at any new articles; they only pretend to a further explication of the articles apostolical, which is a certain confirmation that they did not believe more articles to be of belief necessary to salvation: if they intended these further explications to be as necessary as the dogmatical articles of the Apostles creed, I know not how to answer all that may be objected against that; but the advantage that I shall gather from their not proceeding to new matters, is laid out ready for me in the words of Athanasius, saying of this creed *this is the Catholic faith* and if this authority be good, or his saying true, or he the author, then no man can say of any other article, that it is a part of the Catholic faith, or that the Catholic faith can be enlarged beyond the contents of that symbol; and therefore it is a strange boldness in the church

of Rome, first to add twelve new articles, and then to add the appendix of Athanasius to the end of them, *This is the Catholic faith, without which no man can be saved.**

But so great an example of so excellent a man, hath been either mistaken or followed with too much greediness, for we see all the world in factions, all damning one another, each party damned by all the rest, and there is no disagreeing in opinion from any man that is in love with his own opinion, but damnation presently to all that disagree. A ceremony and a rite hath caused several churches to excommunicate each other, as in the matter of the Saturday fast, and keeping Easter. But what the spirits of men are when they are exasperated in a question and difference of religion, as they call it, though the thing itself may be most inconsiderable, is very evident in that request of Pope Innocent the Third, desiring of the Greeks (but reasonably a man would think) that they would not so much hate the Roman manner of consecrating in unleavened bread, as to wash and scrape and pare the altars after a Roman priest had consecrated. Nothing more furious than a mistaken zeal, and the actions of a scrupulous and abused conscience. When men think every thing to be their faith and their religion, commonly they are so busy in trifles and such impertinencies in which the scene of their mistake lies, that they neglect the greater things of the law, charity, add compliances, and the gentleness of Christian communion, for this is the great principle of mischief, and yet is not more pernicious than unreasonable.

For I demand: can any man say and justify

* Bulla Pii quarti supra forma juramenti professionis fidei, in fin. Coac. Trident.

that the Apostles did deny communion to any man that believed the Apostles creed, and lived a good life? And dare any man tax that proceeding of remissness, and indifferency in religion? And since our blessed Saviour promised salvation to him that *believeth*, (and the Apostles when they gave this word the greatest extent, enlarged it not beyond the borders of the creed) how can any man warrant the condemning of any man to the flames of hell, that is ready to die in attestation of this faith, so expounded and made explicit by the Apostles, and lives accordingly? And to this purpose it was excellently said by a wise and a pious prelate, St. Hilary, *Non per difficiles nos Deus ad beatam vitam quæstiones vocat, &c. In absoluto nobis et facili est æternitas; Jesum suscitatum à mortuis, per deum credere, et ipsum esse Dominum confiteri, &c.** These are the articles which we must believe, which are the sufficient and adequate object of that faith which is required of us in order to salvation. And therefore it was, that when the Bishops of Istria deserted the communion of Pope Pelagius, *in causâ trium capitulorum*,† he gives them an account of his faith, by recitation of the creed, and by attesting the four general councils, and is confident upon this, that there can be no question respecting the validity of faith: *de fidei firmitate nulla poterit esse quæstio vel suspicio generari*; let the Apostles creed, especially so explicated, be but secured, and all faith is secured; and yet that explication too, was less necessary than the articles themselves; for the explication was but accidental, but the articles even before

* L. 10. de Trin. ad finem. † Concil. tom. 4. Edit. Paris. p. 473.

the explication, were accounted a sufficient inlet to the kingdom of heaven.

And that there was security enough, in the simple believing the first articles, it is very certain amongst them, and by their principles who allow of an implicit faith to serve most persons to the greatest purposes; for if the creed did contain in it the whole faith, and that other articles were in it implicitly, (for such is the doctrine of the school, and particularly of Aquinas)* then he that explicitly believes all the creed, does implicitly believe all the articles contained in it, and then it is better the implication should still continue, than that by any explication (which is simply unnecessary) the church should be troubled with questions, and uncertain determinations, and factions enkindled, and animosities set on foot, and men's souls endangered, who before were secured by the explicit belief of all that the Apostles required as necessary, which belief also did secure them for all the rest, because, it implied the belief of whatsoever was virtually in the first articles, if such belief should by chance be necessary.

The sum of this discourse is this, if we take an estimate of the nature of faith, from the dictates and promises evangelical, and from the practice apostolical, the nature of faith and its integrity consists in such propositions which make the foundation of hope and charity, that which is sufficient to make us to do honour to Christ, and to obey him, and to encourage us in both; and this is compleated in the Apostles creed. And since contraries are of the same extent, heresy is

* 22æ. q. 1. 2. 13. cap.

to be judged by its proportion and analogy to faith, and that is heresy only which is against faith. Now because faith is not only a precept of doctrines, but of manners and holy life, whatsoever is either opposite to an article of creed, or teaches ill life, that is heresy; but all those propositions which are extrinsical to these two considerations, be they true or be they false, make not heresy, nor the man an heretic; and therefore however he may be an erring person, yet he is to be used accordingly, pitied and instructed, not condemned or excommunicated; and this is the result of the first ground, the consideration of the nature of faith and heresy.

SECTION III.

Of the difficulty and uncertainty of Arguments from Scripture, in Questions not simply necessary, not literally determined.

GOD who disposes of all things sweetly and according to the nature and capacity of things and persons, had made those only necessary, which he had taken care should be sufficiently propounded to all persons of whom he required the explicit belief. And therefore all the articles of faith are clearly and plainly set down in Scripture, and the gospel is not hid excepting from them that are lost, *nisi pereuntibus* saith St. Paul;* *πάσης γὰρ ἀρετῆς παράκλησιν, καὶ κακίας ἀπάσης τροπὴν ἐν ταύταις*

* *Orthod. fidei. lib. 4. c. 18.*

εὐρίσκομεν, for there we find the defence and exhortation to every virtue, and the warning against every vice, saith Damascen, and that so manifestly that no man can be ignorant of the foundation of faith without his own apparent fault. And this is acknowledged by all wise and good men, and is evident, besides the reasonableness of the thing, in the testimonies of Saints, Austin,* Jerome,† Chrysostome,‡ Fulgentius,§ Hugo de Sancto Victore,|| Theodoret,** Lactantius,†† Theophilus Antiochenus,‡‡ Aquinas,§§ and the latter school-men. And God hath done more; for many things which are only profitable, are also set down so plainly, that (as St. Austin says) every one may partake if he come in a devout and pious spirit, *nemo inde haurire non possit, si modò ad hauriendum devotè ac piè accedat* (*ubi supra de util. cred. c. 6.*) but of such things there is no question commenced in Christendom, and if there were, it cannot but be a crime and human interest that are the authors of such disputes, and therefore these cannot be simple errors, but always heresies, because the principle of them is a personal sin.

But besides these things which are so plainly set down, some for doctrine as St. Paul says, that is, for articles and foundation of faith, some for instruction, some for reproof, some for comfort, that is, in matters practical and speculative of several tempers and constitutions, there are innumerable places containing in them great mysteries,

* Super Psal. 88. et de util. cred. c. 6.

† Super Isa. c. 19. et in Psal. 86.

‡ Homil. 3. in Thess. Ep. 2.

§ Serm. de confess.

|| Miscel. 2. l. 1. tit. 46.

** In Gen. ap. Struch p. 87.

†† C. 6. c. 21.

‡‡ Ad Antioch. l. 2. p. 918.

§§ Par. 1. q. 1. art. 9.

but yet either so enwrapped with a cloud, or so darkened with umbrages, or heightened with expressions, or so covered with allegories and garments of rhetorick, so profound in the matter, or so altered or made intricate in the manner, in the clothing and in the dressing, that God may seem to have left them as trials of our industry, and arguments of our imperfections, and incentives to the longings after heaven, and the clearest revelations of eternity, and as occasions and opportunities of our mutual charity and toleration to each other, and humility in ourselves, rather than the repositories of faith, and furniture of creeds, and articles of belief.

For wherever the word of God is kept, whether in Scripture alone, or also in tradition, he that considers that the meaning of the one, and the truth or certainty of the other, are things of great question, will see a necessity in these things, (which are the subject matter of most of the questions of Christendom) that men should hope to be excused by an implicit faith in God Almighty. For when there are in the explications of Scripture so many commentaries, so many senses and interpretations, so many volumes in all ages, and all, like men's faces, exactly none like another, either this difference and inconvenience is absolutely no fault at all, or if it be, it is excusable, by a mind prepared to consent in that truth which God intended. And this I call an implicit faith in God, which is certainly of as great excellency as an implicit faith in any man or company of men. Because they who do require an implicit faith in the church for articles less necessary, and excuse the want of explicit faith by the implicit, do require an implicit faith in the church, because

they believe that God hath required of them to have a mind prepared to believe whatever the church says; which because it is a proposition of no absolute certainty, whosoever does in readiness of mind believe all that God spake, does also believe that sufficiently, if it be fitting to be believed, that is, if it be true, and if God hath said so; for he hath the same obedience of understanding in this as in the other. But because it is not so certain God hath tied him in all things, to believe that which is called the church, and that it is certain we must believe God in all things, and yet neither know all that either God hath revealed, or the church taught, it is better to take the certain than the uncertain, to believe God rather than men, especially, since if God hath bound us to believe men, our absolute submission to God, does involve that, and there is no inconvenience in the world this way, but that we implicitly believe one article more, viz. the churches authority or infallibility, which may well be pardoned, because it secures our belief of all the rest, and we are sure if we believe all that God said explicitly or implicitly, we also believe the church implicitly in case we are bound to it; but we are not certain, that if we believe any company of men whom we call the church, that we therefore obey God and believe what he hath said. But however, if this will not help us, there is no help for us, but good for tune or absolute predestination, for by choice and industry, no man can secure himself that in all the mysteries of religion taught in Scripture, he shall certainly understand and explicitly believe that sense, that God intended. For to this purpose, there are many considerations.

1. There are so many thousands of copies that were written by persons of several interests and persuasions, such different understandings and tempers, such distinct abilities and weaknesses, that it is no wonder there is so great variety of readings both in the Old Testament and in the New. In the Old Testament, the Jews pretend that the Christians have corrupted many places, on purpose to make symphony between both the Testaments. On the other side, the Christians have had so much reason to suspect the Jews, that when Aquila had translated the Bible in their schools, and had been taught by them, they rejected the edition, many of them, and some of them called it heresy to follow it. And Justin Martyr justified it to Tryphon, that the Jews had defalked many sayings from the books of the old Prophets, and amongst the rest, he instances in that of the psalm, *dicite in nationibus quia Dominus regnavit à ligno*. The last words they have cut off, and prevailed so far in it, that to this day none of our Bibles have it; but if they ought not to have it, then Justin Martyr's Bible had more in it then it should have, for there it was; so that a fault there was either under or over. But however, there are infinite readings in the New Testament, (for in that I will instance) some whole verses in one that are not in another, and there was in some copies of St. Mark's Gospel in the last chapter a whole verse, a chapter it was anciently called, that is not found in our Bibles, as St. Jerome, *ad Hedibiam*, q. 3. notes. The words he repeats, *lib. 2. contra Polygamos*. They confessed, saying, that it is the essence of iniquity and unbelief, which does not allow the true power of God to be apprehended by unclean

spirits; therefore now display thy righteousness. *Et illi satis faciebant dicentes, sæculum istud iniquitatis et incredulitatis substantia est, quæ non sinit per immundos spiritus veram Dei apprehendi virtutem, idcirco jam nunc revela justitiam tuam.* These words are thought by some, to favour of Manicheism, and for ought I can find, were therefore rejected out of many Greek copies, and at last out of the Latin. Now suppose that a Manichee in disputation should urge this place, having found it in his Bible, if a Catholic should answer him by saying it is Apocryphal, and not found in divers Greek copies, might not the Manichee ask how it came in, if it was not the word of God, and if it was, how it came out? and at last take the same liberty of rejecting any other authority which shall be alledged against him; if he can find any copy that may favour him, however that favour be procured; and did not the Ebionites reject all the epistles of St. Paul, upon pretence he was an enemy to the Law of Moses? indeed it was boldly and most unreasonably done; but if one title or one chapter of St. Mark be called Apocryphal, for being suspected of Manicheisme, it is a plea that will too much justify others in their taking and chusing what they list. But I will not urge it so far; but is not there as much reason for the fierce Lutherans to reject the Epistle of St. James for favouring justification by works, or the Epistle to the Hebrews, upon pretence that the sixth and tenth chapters do favor Novatianism; especially since it was by some famous churches at first not accepted, even by the church of Rome herself? The parable of the woman taken in adultery, which is now in John 8. Eusebius says, was not in any gospel, but the

gospel *secundum hebræos*, and St. Jerome makes it doubtful, and so does St. Chrysostome and Euthimius, the first not vouchsafing to explicate it in homilies upon St. John, the other affirming it not to be found in the exacter copies. I shall not need to urge that there are some words so near in sound, that the Scribes might easily mistake : there is one famous one of, serving the Lord Κυρίῳ δαλεύοντες, which yet some copies read, serving the time, καίρῳ δαλεύοντες, the sense is very unlike, though the words be near, and there needs some little luxation to strain this latter reading to a good sense ; that famous precept of St. Puul, that the women must pray with a covering on their head διὰ τὰς ἀγγέλους, because of the Angels, hath brought into the church an opinion that Angels are present in churches, and are spectators of our devotion and deportment. Such an opinion, if it should meet with peevish opposites on one side, and confident hyperaspists on the other, might possibly make a sect, and here were a clear ground for the affirmative, and yet who knows but that it might have been a mistake of the transcribers to double the γ ? for if it were read διὰ τὰς ἀγέλους, that the sense be, women in public assemblies must wear a vail, by reason of the companies of the young men there present, it would be no ill exchange for the loss of a letter, to make so probable, so clear a sense of the place. But the instances in this kind, are too many, as appears in the variety of readings in several copies proceeding from the negligence or ignorance of the transcribers, or the malicious endeavour of heretics,* or the inserting marginal notes into

* Græci corruperunt novum Testamentum ut testantur Tertul. l. 5. adv. Marcion. Euseb. l. 5. Hist. c. ult. Irenæ. l. 1. c. 29. allu. hæres. Basil. l. 2. contr. Eunomium.

the text, or the nearness of several words. Indeed there is so much evidence of this particular, that it hath encouraged the servants of the vulgar translation (for so some are now a-day's) to prefer that translation before the original ; for although they have attempted that proposition with very ill success, yet that they could think it possible to be proved, is an argument there is much variety and alterations in divers texts ; for if they were not, it were impudence to pretend a translation, and that, none of the best, should be better than the original. But so it is that this variety of reading is not of slight consideration ; for although it be demonstrably true, that all things necessary to faith and good manners are preserved from alteration and corruption, because they are of things necessary, and they could not be necessary, unless they were delivered to us, God in his goodness and his justice having obliged himself to preserve that which he hath bound us to observe and keep ; yet in other things which God hath not obliged himself so punctually to preserve, in these things since variety of reading is crept in, every reading takes away a degree of certainty from any proposition derivative from those places so read : and if some copies (especially if they be public and notable) omit a verse or title, every argument from such a title or verse, loses much of its strength and reputation ; and we find it in a great instance. For when in probation of the mystery of the glorious Unity in Trinity, we alledge that saying of St. John *there are three which bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Spirit, and these three are one* : the Antitrinitarians think they have answered the argument by saying the Syrian translation, and divers Greek copies have not that verse in them,

and therefore being of doubtful authority, cannot conclude with certainty in a question of faith. And there is an instance on the Catholic part. For when the Arians urge the saying of our Saviour, *No man knows that day and hour* (viz. of judgment) *no not the Son, but the Father only*, to prove that the Son knows not all things, and therefore cannot be God in the proper sense; St. Ambrose thinks he hath answered the argument by saying, those words *no not the Son* was thrust into the text by fraud of the Arians. So that here we have one objection, which must first be cleared and made infallible, before we can be ascertained in any such question as to call them heretics that dissent.

2. I consider that there are very many senses and designs of expounding Scripture, and when the grammatical sense is found out, we are many times never the nearer; it is not that which was intended; for there is in very many Scriptures a double sense, a literal and a spiritual; (for the Scripture is *a Book written within and without*. (Apoc. 5.) and both these senses are subdivided, For the literal sense is either natural or figurative: and the spiritual is sometimes allegorical, sometimes anagogical; nay, sometimes there are divers literal senses in the same sentence, as St. Austin excellently proves in divers places, * and it appears in divers quotations in the New Testament, where the Apostles and divine writers bring the same testimony to divers purposes; and particularly, St. Paul's making that saying of the Psalm, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*, to

* Lib. 12. confess. cap. 26. Lib. 11. de Civit. Dei. c. 19. Li. 3. de doctrinâ Christ. cap. 27.

be an argument of Christ's resurrection, and a designation or ordination to his pontificate is an instance very famous in his 1st. and 5th. chapter to the Hebrews. But now there being such variety of senses in Scripture, and but few places so marked out, as not to be capable of divers senses, if men will write commentaries, as Herod made orations with, a soul full of vanity, μετα πολλῆς φαντασίας, what infallible κριτήριον will be left whereby to judge of the certain dogmatical resolute sense of such places which have been the matter of question? For put case a question were commenced concerning the degrees of glory in heaven, as there is in the schools a noted one, to shew an inequality of reward, Christ's parable is brought of the reward of ten cities, and of five according to the divers improvement of the talents; this sense is mystical, and yet very probable, and understood by men for aught I know, to this very sense. And the result of the argument is made good by St. Paul, *as one star differeth from another in glory*; so shall it be in the resurrection of the dead. Now suppose another should take the same liberty of expounding another parable to a mystical sense and interpretation, as all parables must be expounded; then the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, and though differing in labour, yet having an equal reward, to any man's understanding may seem very strongly to prove the contrary, and as if it were of purpose, and that it were the, prime design *primum intentum* of the parable, the Lord of the vineyard determined the point resolutely upon the mutiny and repining of them that had born the burthen and heat of the day, *I will give unto this last even as to thee*; which to my sense seems to determine

the question of degrees ; they that work but little, and they that work long, shall not be distinguished in the reward, though accidentally they were in the work : and if this opinion could but answer St. Paul's words, it stands as fair, and perhaps fairer than the other. Now if we look well upon the words of St. Paul, we shall find he speaks nothing at all of diversity of degrees of glory in beatified bodies, but the differences of glory in bodies heavenly and earthly. *There are* (says he) *bodies earthly, and there are heavenly bodies : and one is the glory of the earthly, another the glory of the heavenly ; one glory of the Sun, another of the Moon, &c.* So shall it be in the Resurrection ; for it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. Plainly thus, our bodies in the Resurrection shall differ as much from our bodies here in the state of corruption, as one star does from another. And now suppose a sect should be commenced upon this question (upon lighter and vainer many have been) either side must resolve to answer the other's arguments, whether they can or no, and to deny to each other a liberty of expounding the parable to such a sense, and yet themselves must use it or want an argument. But men used to be unjust in their own cases ; and were it not better to leave each other to their liberty and seek to preserve their own charity ? for when the words are capable of a mystical or diverse sense, I know not why men's fancies or understandings should be more bound to be like one another than their faces : and either in all such places of Scripture, a liberty must be indulged to every honest and peaceable wise man, or else all argument from such places must be wholly declined. Now, although I instanced in a question, which by good fortune never came to

open defiance, yet there have been sects framed upon lighter grounds, more inconsiderable questions, which have been disputed on either side with arguments less material and less pertinent. St. Austin laughed at the Donatists, for bringing that saying of the spouse in the *Canticles* to prove their schism, “Tell me where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon.”* For from thence they concluded the residence of the church was only in the south part of the world, only in Africa.† It was but a weak way of argument; yet the Fathers were free enough to use such mediums, to prove mysteries of great concernment; but yet again, when they speak either against an adversary, or with consideration, they deny that such mystical senses can sufficiently confirm a question of faith. But I shall instance in the great question of rebaptization of heretics, which many Saints, and Martyrs, and Confessors, and divers councils, and almost all Asia and Africa did once believe and practise. Their grounds for the invalidity of the baptism by a heretic, were such mystical words as these, “Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.”—“He that washeth himself after the touching of a dead body, if he touch it again, what availeth his washing.”—“Drink waters out of thine own cistern, &c.”—“We know that God heareth not sinners.”‡ And *he that is not with me is against, Luke, 11.* I am not sure the other

* Indica mihi ubi pascas, ubi cubes in meridie.

† Hieron. in. Matth. 13.

‡ Oleum peccatoris non impinguet caput meum Ps. 140. And Qui baptizatur à mortuo, quid proficit lavatio ejus? Eccles. 34. And ab aquâ alienâ abstinete, Prov. 5. And Deus peccatores non exaudit, Joh. 9.

part had arguments so good. For the great one of, one faith one baptism, *una fides, unum baptisma*, did not conclude it to their understandings who were of the other opinion, and men famous in their generations; for it was no argument that they who had been baptised by John's baptism should not be baptised in the name of Jesus, because one God, one baptism, *unus Deus, unum baptisma*; and as it is still one faith which a man confesseth several times, and one sacrament of the Eucharist, though a man often communicates; so it might be one baptism though often ministered. And the unity of baptism might not be derived from the unity of the ministration, but from the unity of the religion into which they are baptised; though baptized a thousand times, yet because it was still in the name of the Holy Trinity, still into the death of Christ, it might be one baptism, *unum baptisma*. Whether St. Cyprian, Firmilian, and their colleagues had this discourse or no (I know not) I am sure they might have had much better to have evacuated the force of that argument, although I believe they had the wrong cause in hand. But this is it that I say, that when a question is so undetermined in Scripture, that the arguments rely only upon such mystical places, whence the best fancies can draw the greatest variety, and such which perhaps were never intended by the Holy Ghost, it were good the rivers did not swell higher than the fountain, and the confidence higher than the argument and evidence; for in this case there could not any thing be so certainly proved, as that the disagreeing party should deserve to be condemned by a sentence of excommunication for disbelieving it, and yet they were; which I wonder at so much the more, because they (who as it was

since judged) had the right cause, had not any sufficient argument from Scripture, not so much as such mystical arguments, but did fly to the tradition of the church, in which also I shall afterward shew, they had nothing that was absolutely certain.

3. I consider that there are divers places of Scripture containing in them mysteries and questions of great concernment, and yet the fabric and constitution is such, that there is no certain mark to determine whether the sense of them should be literal or figurative; I speak not here concerning extrinsical means of determination, as traditive interpretation, councils, fathers, popes, and the like; I shall consider them afterward in their several places; but here the subject matter being concerning Scripture in its own capacity, I say there is nothing in the nature of the thing to determine the sense and meaning, but it must be gotten out as it can; and that therefore it is unreasonable, that what of itself is ambiguous should be understood in its own prime sense and intention, under the pain of either a sin or an anathema; I instance in that famous place from whence hath sprung that question of transubstantiation, This is my body, *Hoc est corpus meum*. The words are plain and clear, apt to be understood in the literal sense, and yet this sense is so hard, as it does violence to reason, and therefore it is the question whether or no it be not a figurative speech. But here what shall we have to determine it? What means soever we take, and to what sense soever you will expound it, you shall be put to give an account why you expound other places of Scripture in the same case to quite contrary senses. For if you expound it literally, then besides that it seems to entrench

upon the words of our blessed Saviour, *The words that I speak they are spirit and they are life*, that is, to be spiritually understood, (and it is a miserable thing to see what wretched shifts are used to reconcile the literal sense to these words, and yet to distinguish it from the capernaïtical fancy) but besides this, why are not those other sayings of Christ expounded literally, *I am a vine, I am the door, I am a rock*? Why do we fly to a figure in those parallel words? *This is the covenant which I make between me and you*; and yet that covenant was but the sign of the covenant; and why do we fly to a figure in a precept, as well as in mystery and a proposition? *If thy right hand offend thee cut it off*; and yet we have figures enough to save a limb. If it be said because reason tells us these are not to be expounded according to the letter; this will be no plea for them who retain the literal exposition of the other instance against all reason, against all philosophy, against all sense, and against two or three sciences. But if you expound these words figuratively, besides that you are to contest against a world of prejudices, you give yourself the liberty, which if others will use when either they have a reason or a necessity so to do, they may perhaps turn all into allegory, and so may evacuate any precept, and elude any argument. Well, so it is that very wise men have expounded things allegorically,* when they should have expounded them literally.

* Sic St. Hieron. In adolescentiâ provocatus ardore et studio Scripturarum allegoricè interpretatus sum Abdiam prophetam, cujus historiam nesciebam. *De sensu allegorico S. Script. dixit Basilus*, ὡς κεκομψάμενον μετα τον λόγον ἀποδεχόμεθα, ἀληθῆ δε εἶναι ἑ πάνν δώσωμεν. L. 29. de Civit. Dei, c. 7. præ. fat. L. 19. in Isai. et in c. 36. Ezek.

So did the famous Origen, who as St. Jerome reports of him, turned Paradise so into an allegory, that he took away quite the truth of the story, and not only Adam was turned out of the garden, but the garden itself out of Paradise. Others expound things literally when they should understand them in allegory; so did the ancient Papias understand (Apocal. 20.) Christ's Millenary reign upon earth, and so, depressed the hopes of Christianity and their desires to the longing and expectation of temporal pleasures and satisfactions, and he was followed by Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, Lactantius, and indeed the whole church generally till St. Austin and St. Jerome's time who first of any whose works are extant did reprove the error. If such great spirits be deceived in finding out what kind of senses be to be given to Scriptures, it may well be endured that we who sit at their feet, may also tread in the steps of them whose feet could not always tread aright.

4. I consider that there are some places of Scripture that have the self same expressions, the same preceptive words, the same reason and account in all appearance, and yet either must be expounded to quite different senses, or else we must renounce the communion, and the charities of a great part of Christendom. And yet there is absolutely nothing in the thing or in its circumstances, or in its adjuncts that can determine it to different purposes. I instance in those great exclusive negatives for the necessity of both sacraments.* Whoso is not born of water, &c.—

* Nisi quis renatus fuerit ex aquâ, &c. Nisi manducaveritis carnem filii hominis, &c. a non introibit in regnum cœlorum.

He that eateth not the flesh of the son of man, &c. shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven, for both these. Now then the first is urged for the absolute indispensable necessity of baptism even in infants, insomuch that infants go to part of hell if (inculpably both on their own and their parents part) they miss of baptism, for that is the doctrine of the church of Rome, which they learned from St. Austin, and others also do from hence baptize infants, though with a less opinion of its absolute necessity. And yet the same manner of precept in the same form of words, in the same manner of threatening, by an exclusive negative, shall not enjoin us to communicate infants, though damnation (at least in form of words) be exactly and throughout *per omnia* alike appendant to the neglect of holy baptism and the venerable Eucharist. If unless he is born again, *nisi quis renatus* shall conclude against the Anabaptist, for necessity of baptizing infants, (as sure enough we say, it does) why shall not an equal, unless ye eat, *nisi comederitis*, bring infants to the holy communion? The Primitive Church for some two whole ages did follow their own principles, wherever they lead them; and seeing that upon the same ground equal results must follow, they did communicate infants as soon as they had baptised them. And why the church of Rome should not do so too, being she expounds *nisi comederitis* of oral manducation, I cannot yet learn a reason. And for others that expound it of a spiritual manducation, why they shall not allow the disagreeing part the same liberty of expounding *nisi quis renatus* too, I by no means can understand. And in these cases no external determiner can be pretended in answer. For

whatsoever is extrinsical to the words, as councils, tradition, church authority, and fathers, either have said nothing at all, or have concluded by their practice contrary to the present opinion, as is plain in their communicating infants by virtue of *nisi comederitis*.

5. I shall not need to urge the mysteriousness of some points in Scripture, which naturally, *ex natura rei* are hard to be understood though very plainly represented. For there are some mysteries in divinity, *secreta theologiæ*, which are only to be understood by persons very holy and spiritual, which are rather to be felt than discoursed of, and therefore if peradventure they be offered to public consideration, they will therefore be opposed because they run the same fortune with many other questions, that is, not to be understood, and so much the rather because their understanding, that is, the feeling such secrets of the kingdom, are not the results of logic and philosophy, nor yet of public revelation but of the public spirit privately working, and in no man is a duty, but in all that have it, is a reward, and is not necessary for all, but given to some, producing its operations, not regularly, but upon occasions, personal necessities and new emergencies. Of this nature are the spirit of obsequation, belief of particular salvation, special influences and comforts coming from a sense of the spirit of adoption, actual fervors and great complacencies in devotion, spiritual joys, which are little drawings aside of the curtains of peace and eternity, and antipasts of immortality. But the not understanding the perfect constitution and temper of these mysteries (and it is hard for any man so to understand, as to make others do so too that feel them not) is cause that in many questions of secret theology, by being

very apt and easy to be mistaken, there is a necessity in forbearing one another ; and this consideration would have been of good use in the question between Soto and Catharinus, both for the preservation of their charity and explication of the mystery.

6. But here it will not be unseasonable to consider, that all systems and principles of science are expressed, so that either by reason of the universality of the terms and subject matter, or the infinite variety of human understandings, and these peradventure swayed by interest, or determined by things accidental and extrinsical, they seem to divers men, nay to the same men upon divers occasions to speak things extremely disparate and sometimes contrary, but very often of great variety. And this very thing happens also in Scripture, that if it were not in a sacred subject, *re sacrá et seriá*, it were excellent sport to observe how the same place of Scripture serves several turns upon occasion, and they at that time believe the words sound nothing else, whereas in the liberty of their judgment and abstracting from that occasion, their commentaries understand them wholly to a differing sense. It is a wonder of what excellent use to the church of Rome, is, I will give thee the keys, *tibi dabo claves*. It was spoken to Peter and none else, (sometimes) and therefore it concerns him and his successors only, the rest are to derive from him. And yet if you question them for their sacrament of penance and priestly absolution, then *tibi dabo claves* comes in, and that was spoken to St. Peter, and in him to the whole college of the Apostles, and in them to the whole hierarchy. If you question why the pope pretends to free souls from purgatory, *tibi*

dabo claves is his warrant ; but if you tell him the keys are only for binding and loosing on earth directly, and in heaven consequently ; and that purgatory is a part of hell, or rather neither earth nor heaven nor hell, and so the keys seem to have nothing to do with it, then his commission is to be enlarged by a suppletory of reason and consequences, and his keys shall unlock this difficulty ; for it is the key of *knowledge*, *clavis scientiæ*, as well as of *authority*, *authoritatis*. And these keys shall enable him to expound Scriptures infallibly, to determine questions, to preside in councils, to dictate to all the world magisterially, to rule the church, to dispense with oaths, to abrogate laws : and if his key of knowledge will not, the key of authority shall, and *tibi dabo claves* shall answer for all. We have an instance in the single fancy of one man, what rare variety of matter is afforded from those plain words of, I have prayed for thee, Peter, *Oravi pro te Petre*, Luke 22, for that place says Bellarmine,* is otherwise to be understood of Peter, otherwise of the popes, and otherwise of the church of Rome. And *pro te* signifies that Christ prayed that Peter might neither err personally nor judicially, and that Peter's successors, if they did err personally, might not err judicially, and that the Roman church might not err personally. All this variety of sense is pretended by the fancy of one man, to be in a few words which are as plain and simple as are any words in Scripture. And what then in those thousands that are intricate ? So is done with, feed my sheep, *pasce oves*, which a man would think were a commission as innocent and guiltless of designs, as the

* Bellar. lib. 4. de Pontif. c. 3. § respondeo primò.

sheep in the folds are. But if it be asked why the bishop of Rome calls himself Universal Bishop, *pasce oves* is his warrant? Why he pretends to a power of deposing Princes, *pasce oves*, said Christ to Peter, the second time. If it be demanded why also he pretends to a power of authorising his subjects to kill him, feed my lambs, *pasce agnos*, said Christ the third time: and *pasce* is *doce*, teach; and *pasce* is *impera*, command; and *pasce* is *occide*, slay. Now if others should take the same (unreasonableness I will not say, but the same) liberty in expounding Scripture, or if it be not licence taken, but that the Scripture itself is so full and redundant in senses quite contrary, what man soever, or what company of men soever shall use this principle, will certainly find such rare productions from several places, that either the unreasonableness of the thing will discover the error of the proceeding, or else there will be a necessity of permitting a great liberty of judgment, where is so infinite variety without limit or mark of necessary determination. If the first, then because an error is so obvious and ready to ourselves, it will be great imprudence or tyranny to be hasty in judging others; but if the latter, it is it that I contend for: for it is most unreasonable, when either the thing itself ministers variety, or that we take licence to ourselves in variety of interpretations, or proclaim to all the world our great weakness, by our actually being deceived, that we should either prescribe to others magisterially when we are in error, or limit their understandings when the thing itself affords liberty and variety.

SECTION IV.

Of the difficulty of Expounding Scripture.

THESE considerations are taken from the nature of Scripture itself; but then if we consider that we have no certain ways of determining places of difficulty and question, infallibly and certainly, but that we must hope to be saved in the belief of things plain, necessary and fundamental, and our pious endeavour to find out God's meaning in such places which he hath left under a cloud for other great ends reserved to his own knowledge, we shall see a very great necessity in allowing a Liberty in Prophecy without prescribing authoritatively to other men's consciences, and becoming lords and masters of their faith. Now the means of expounding Scripture are either external or internal. For the external, as church authority, tradition, fathers, councils and decrees of bishops, they are of a distinct consideration, and follow after in their order. But here we will first consider the invalidity and uncertainty of all those means of expounding Scripture which are more proper and internal to the nature of the thing. The great masters of commentaries, some whereof have undertaken to know all mysteries, have propounded many ways to expound Scripture, which indeed are excellent helps, but not infallible assistances, both because themselves are but moral instruments which force not truth from concealment, *ex abscondito*, as also because they are not infallibly sued and applied. 1. Sometimes the sense is drawn forth by the context and connection of parts:

it is well when it can be so. But when there is too or three antecedents, and subjects spoken of, what man or what rule shall ascertain me that I make my reference true by drawing the relation to such an antecedent; to which I have a mind to apply it, another hath not. For in a contexture where one part does not always depend upon another. Where things of differing natures intervene and interrupt the first intentions, there it is not always very probable to expound Scripture, take its meaning by its proportion to the neighbouring words. But who desires satisfaction in this, may read the observation verified in St. Gregory's morals upon Job, lib. 5. c. 29. and the instances he there brings are excellent proof, that this way of interpretation does not warrant any man to impose his expositions upon the belief and understanding of other men too confidently and magisterially.

2. Another great pretence of medium is the conference of places, which Illyricus calls, a mighty remedy, and a most happy exposition of holy Scripture, *ingens remedium et fœlicissimam expositionem sanctæ scripturæ*; and indeed so it is if well and temperately used; but then we are beholding to them that do so; for there is no rule that can constrain them to it; for comparing of places is of so indefinite capacity, that if there be ambiguity of words, variety of sense, alteration of circumstances, or difference of style amongst divine writers, then there is nothing that may be more abused by wilful people, or may more easily deceive the unwary, or that may amuse the most intelligent observer. The Anabaptists take advantage enough in this proceeding, (and indeed so may any one that list) and when we pretend against them the necessity of baptising all, by authority of *nisi quis*

renatus fuerit ex aqua et Spiritu, unless born of water and the Spirit; they have a parallel for it, and tell us that Christ will *baptise us with the Holy Ghost and with fire*, and that one place expounds the other; and because by fire is not meant an element or any thing that is natural, but an allegory and figurative expression of the same thing; so also by water may be meant the figure signifying the effect or manner of operation of the Holy Spirit. Fire in one place, and water in the other, do but represent to us that Christ's baptism is nothing else but the cleansing and purifying us by the Holy Ghost; but that which I here note as of the greatest concernment, and which in all reason ought to be an utter overthrow to this topic, is an universal abuse of it among those that use it most, and when two places seem to have the same expression, or if a word have a double signification, because in this place it may have such a sense, therefore it must, because in one of the places the sense is to their purpose, they conclude that therefore it must be so in the other too. An instance I give in the great question between the Socinians and the Catholics. If any place be urged in which our blessed Saviour is called God, they shew you two or three where the word God is taken in a depressed sense, for a *quasi Deus*, as when God said to Moses, I have made thee a god to Pharoah, *Constitui te Deum Pharaonis*; and hence they argue, because I can shew the word is used for a false god, *Deus factus*, therefore no argument is sufficient to prove Christ to be true God, *Deus verus*, from the appellative of *Deus*. And might not another argue to the exact contrary, and as well urge that Moses is the true God, *Deus verus*, because in some places the word

Deus is used for the eternal God, *pro Deo æterno*: both ways the argument concludes impiously and unreasonably. It is a fallacy to proceed from possibility to affirmation, *à posse ad esse affirmativè*; because breaking of bread is sometimes used for an eucharistical manducation in Scripture; therefore I shall not from any testimony of Scripture affirming the first Christians to have broken bread together, conclude that they lived hospitably and in common society. Because it may possibly be eluded, therefore it does not signify any thing. And this is the great way of answering all the arguments that can be brought against any thing that any man hath a mind to defend; and any man that reads any controversies of any side, shall find as many instances of this vanity almost as he finds arguments from Scripture; this fault was of old noted by St. Austin,* for then they had got the trick, and he is angry at it. We ought not to consider any thing prescribed because something else in another place possesses a general similarity of signification, or believe it always has the same meaning.†

3. Oftentimes Scriptures are pretended to be expounded by a proportion and analogy of reason. And this is as the other, if it be well, it is well. But unless there were some *intellectus universalis* furnished with infallible propositions, by referring to which every man might argue infallibly, this logic may deceive as well as any of the rest. For it is with reason as with men's tastes; although there are some general principles which are rea-

* De Doctri. Christian. lib. 3.

† Neque enim putare debemus esse præscriptum, ut quod in aliquo loco res aliqua per similitudinem significaverit, hoc etiam semper significare credamus.

sonable to all men, yet every man is not able to draw out all its consequences, nor to understand them when they are drawn forth, nor to believe when he does understand them. There is a precept of St. Paul directed to the Thessalonians before they were gathered into a body of a church, 2 Thes. iii. 6. *To withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly.* But if this precept were now observed, I would fain know whether we should not fall into that inconvenience which St. Paul sought to avoid in giving the same commandment to the church of Corinth, 1 Cor. v. 9. *I wrote to you that ye should not company with fornicators; and yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, for then ye must go out of the world:* and therefore he restrains it to a quitting the society of Christians living ill lives. But now that all the world hath been Christians, if we should sin in keeping company with vicious Christians, must we not also go out of this world? Is not the precept made null, because the reason is altered, and things are come about, and that the οἱ πολλοὶ are the brethren ἀδελφοὶ ὀνομαζόμενοι called brethren, as St. Paul's phrase is? And yet either this never was considered, or not yet believed; for it is generally taken to be obligatory, though (I think) seldom practised. But when we come to expound Scriptures to a certain sense by arguments drawn from prudential motives, then we are in a vast plain without any sufficient guide, and we shall have so many senses, as there are human prudences. But that which goes further than this, is a parity of reason from a plain place of Scripture to an obscure, from that which is plainly set down in a text to another that is more remote from it. And thus is that place in St. Mat-

thew forced, *If thy brother refuse to be amended*, tell it to the church, *Dic ecclesiæ*. Hence some of the Roman doctors argue, if Christ commands to tell the church in case of adultery or private injury, then much more in case of heresy. Well, suppose this to be a good interpretation; why must I stay here? Why may not I also add by a parity of reason, if the church must be told of heresy, much more of treason: and why may not I reduce all sins to the cognizance of a church tribunal, as some men do indirectly, and Snecanus does heartily and plainly? If a man's principles be good, and his deductions certain, he need not care whither they carry him. But when an authority is intrusted to a person, and the extent of his power expressed in his commission, it will not be safety to meddle beyond his commission upon confidence of a parity of reason. To instance once more; when Christ in *pasce oves et tu es Petrus*, feed my sheep and thou art Peter, gave power to the pope to govern the church (for to that sense the church of Rome expounds those authorities) by a certain consequence of reason, say they, he gave all things necessary for exercise of this jurisdiction, and therefore in *pasce oves* he gave him an indirect power over temporals, for that is necessary that he may do his duty: well, having gone thus far, we will go further upon the parity of reason, therefore he hath given the pope the gift of tongues, and he hath given him power to give it; for how else shall Xavier convert the Indians? He hath given him also power to command the seas and the winds, that they should obey him, for this also is very necessary in some cases. And so feed my sheep, is receive the gift of tongues, command the winds, dispose of princely

diadems, and the possessions of the people, and the influences of heaven too: *pasce oves* is *accipe donum linguarum*, and *impera ventis, et dispone regum diademata, et laicorum prædia*, and *influentialias cæli* too, and whatsoever the parity of reason will judge equally necessary in order to *pasce oves*; when a man does speak reason, it is but reason he should be heard; but though he may have the good fortune, or the great abilities to do it, yet he hath not a certainty, no regular infallible assistance, no inspiration of arguments and deductions; and if he had, yet because it must be reason that must judge of reason, unless other men's understandings were of the same air, the same constitution and ability, they cannot be prescribed unto by another man's reason; especially because such reasonings as usually are in explication of particular places of Scripture, depend upon minute circumstances and particularities, in which it is so easy to be deceived, and so hard to speak reason regularly and always, that it is the greater wonder if we be not deceived.

4. Others pretend to expound Scripture by the analogy of faith, and that is the most sure and infallible way (as it is thought :) but upon stricter survey it is but a chimera, a thing in *nubibus*, in the clouds, which varies like the right hand and left hand of a pillar, and at the best is but like the coast of a country to a traveller out of his way; it may bring him to his journey's end though twenty miles about; it may keep him from running into the sea, and from mistaking a river for dry land; but whether this little path or the other be the right way it tells not. So is the analogy of faith, that is, if I understand it right, the rule of faith, that is the creed. Now were it not a fine device

to go to expound all the Scripture by the creed, there being in it so many thousand places which have no more relation to any article in the creed, then they have to the Eclogues of Virgil. Indeed if a man resolves to keep the analogy of faith, that is to expound Scripture, so as not to do any violence to any fundamental article, he shall be sure however he errs, yet not to destroy faith, he shall not perish in his exposition. And that was the precept given by St. Paul, that all prophesyings should be estimated, according to the analogy of faith, *καὶ ἀναλογίαν πίστεως*, Romans vi. 12. and to this very purpose, Saint Austin in his exposition of Genesis, by way of preface sets down the articles of faith, with this design and protestation of it, that if he says nothing against those articles, though he miss the particular sense of the place, there is no danger, or sin in his exposition; but how that analogy of faith should have any other influence in expounding such places in which those articles of faith are neither expressed, nor involved, I understand not. But then if you extend the analogy of faith further than that which is proper to the rule or symbol of faith, then every man expounds Scripture according to the analogy of faith; but what? his own faith: which faith if it be questioned, I am no more bound to expound according to the analogy of another man's faith, than he to expound according to the analogy of mine. And this is it that is complained on of all sides that overvalue their own opinions. Scripture seems so clearly to speak what they believe, that they wonder all the world does not see it as clear as they do; but they satisfy themselves with saying that it is because they come with prejudice, whereas if they had the

true belief, that is, theirs, they would easily see what they see. And this is very true: for if they did believe as others believe, they would expound Scriptures to their sense; but if this be expounding according to the analogy of faith, it signifies no more than this, be you of my mind, and then my arguments will seem concluding, and my authorities and allegations pressing and pertinent: and this will serve on all sides, and therefore will do but little service to the determination of questions, or prescribing to other men's consciences on any side.

Lastly; consulting the originals is thought a great matter to interpretation of Scriptures. But this is to small purpose: for indeed, it will expound the Hebrew and the Greek, and rectify translations. But I know no man that says that the Scriptures in Hebrew and Greek, are easy and certain to be understood, and that they are hard in Latin and English: the difficulty is in the thing however it be expressed, the least is in the language. If the original languages were our mother tongue, Scripture is not much the easier to us; and a natural Greek or a Jew, can with no more reason, nor authority obtrude his interpretations upon other men's consciences, than a man of another nation. Add to this, that the inspection of the original, is no more certain way of interpretation of Scripture now, than it was to the Fathers and primitive ages of the church; and yet he that observes what infinite variety of translations of the Bible were in the first ages of the church (as St. Jerome observes) and never a one like another; will think that we shall differ as much in our interpretations as they did, and that the medium is as uncertain to us as it was to

them ; and so it is ; witness the great number of late translations, and the infinite number of commentaries, which are too pregnant an argument, that we neither agree in the understanding of the words nor of the sense.

The truth is, all these ways of interpreting of Scripture which of themselves are good helps, are made either by design, or by our infirmities, ways of intricating and involving Scriptures in greater difficulty, because men do not learn their doctrines from Scripture, but come to the understanding of Scripture with preconceptions in ideas of doctrines of their own, and then no wonder that Scriptures look like pictures, wherein every man in the room believes they look on him only, and that wheresoever he stands, or how often soever he changes his station. So that now what was intended for a remedy, becomes the promoter of our disease, and our meat becomes the matter of sicknesses : and the mischief is, the wit of man cannot find a remedy for it ; for there is no rule, no limit, no certain principle, by which all men may be guided to a certain and so infallible an interpretation, that he can with any equity prescribe to others to believe his interpretations in places of controversy or ambiguity. A man would think that the memorable prophesy of Jacob, that the sceptre should not depart from Judah till Shiloh come, should have been so clear a determination of the time of the Messias, that a Jew should never have doubted it to have been verified in Jesus of Nazareth ; and yet for this so clear vaticination, they have no less than twenty-six answers. St. Paul and St. James seem to speak a little diversly concerning justification by faith and works, and yet to my understanding it

is very easy to reconcile them : but all men are not of my mind ; for Osiander in his confutation of the book which Melancthon wrote against him, observes, that there are twenty several opinions concerning justification, all drawn from the Scriptures, by the men only of the Augustan Confession. There are sixteen several opinions concerning original sin ; and as many definitions of the sacraments as there are sects of men that disagree about them.

And now what help is there for us in the midst of these uncertainties ? If we follow any one translation, or any one man's commentary, what rule shall we have to chuse the right by ? Or is any one man, that hath translated perfectly, or expounded infallibly ? No translation challenges such a prerogative as to be authentic, but the vulgar Latin ; and yet see with what good success : for when it was declared authentic by the Council of Trent, Sixtus put forth a copy much mended of what it was, and tied all men to follow that ; but that did not satisfy ; for Pope Clement reviews and corrects it in many places, and still the decree remains in a changed subject. And secondly, that translation will be very unapt to satisfy, in which one of their own men, Isidore Clarius, a Monk of Brescia, found and mended eight thousand faults, besides innumerable others which he says he pretermitted. And then thirdly, to shew how little themselves were satisfied with it, divers learned men amongst them did new translate the Bible, and thought they did God and the church good service in it. So that if you take this for your precedent, you are sure to be mistaken infinitely : if you take any other, the authors themselves do not promise you any secu-

rity. If you resolve to follow any one as far only as you see cause, then you only do wrong or right by chance; for you have certainty just proportionable to your own skill, to your own infallibility. If you resolve to follow any one, whithersoever he leads, we shall oftentimes come thither, where we shall see ourselves become ridiculous, as it happened in the case of Spiridion Bishop of Cyprus, who so resolved to follow his old book, that when an eloquent Bishop who was desired to preach, read his text, take up thy bed and walk, *Tu autem tolle cubile tuum et ambula*; Spiridion was very angry with him, because in his book it was, take up thy couch, *tolle lectum tuum*, and thought it arrogance in the preacher to speak better Latin than his translator had done: and if it be thus in Translations, it is far worse in Expositions: * because for example all do not receive the holy scriptures on account of its profundity in the same sense, for there are as many men to study it as there are sentences; in which every man knows what innumerable ways there are of being mistaken, God having in things not simply necessary, left such a difficulty upon those parts of Scripture which are the subject matters of controversy, *ad edomandum labore superbiam, et intellectum à fastidio revocandum* (as St. Austin † gives a reason) that all that err honestly, are therefore to be pitied, and tolerated, because it is or may be the condition of every man at one time or other.

‡ Quia scil. Scripturam sacram pro ipsa sui altitudine non uno eodemque sensu omnes accipiunt, ut penè quot homines tot illic sententiæ erui posse videantur, said Vincent. Lirinensis. In Commonit.

† Lib. 2. de doctr. Christian. c. 6.

The sum is this: since holy Scripture is the repository of divine truths, and the great rule of faith, to which all sects of Christians do appeal for probation of their several opinions, and since all agree in the articles of the creed as things clearly and plainly set down, and as containing all that which is of simple and prime necessity; and since on the other side there are in Scripture many other mysteries, and matters of question upon which there is a veil; since there are so many copies with infinite varieties of reading; since a various interpunction, a parenthesis, a letter, an accent, may much alter the sense; since some places have divers literal senses, many have spiritual, mystical and allegorical meanings; since there are so many tropes, metonymies, ironies, hyperboles, proprieties and improprieties of language, whose understanding depends upon such circumstances that it is almost impossible to know its proper interpretation; now that the knowledge of such circumstances and particular stories is irrevocably lost: since there are some mysteries which at the best advantage of expression, are not easy to be apprehended, and whose explication, by reason of our imperfections, must needs be dark, sometimes weak, sometimes unintelligible: and lastly, since those ordinary means of expounding Scripture, as searching the originals, conference of places, parity of reason, and analogy of faith, are all dubious, uncertain, and very fallible, he that is the wisest and by consequence the likeliest to expound truest in all probability of reason, will be very far from confidence, because every one of these and many more, are like so many degrees of improbability and uncertainty, all depressing our certainty of finding out truth in such mysteries

and amidst so many difficulties. And therefore a wise man that considers this, would not willingly be prescribed to by others; and therefore if he also be a just man, he will not impose upon others; for it is best every man should be left in that liberty, from which no man can justly take him, unless he could secure him from error: so that here also there is a necessity to conserve the Liberty of Prophesying, and interpreting Scriptures; a necessity derived from the consideration of the difficulty of Scripture in questions controverted, and the uncertainty of any internal medium of interpretation.

SECTION V.

Of the insufficiency and uncertainty of Tradition to expound Scripture, or determine Questions.

IN the next place, we must consider those extrinsical means of interpreting Scripture, and determining questions, which they most of all confide in, that restrain prophesying with the greatest tyranny. The first and principal is tradition, which is pretended not only to expound Scripture, “for it is requisite, on account of the various turns and windings of error, that the drift of prophetic and apostolic interpretation, be regulated by the concurrent opinion of the universal church,”* but also to propound articles

* *Necesse enim est propter tantos tam varii erroris anfractus, ut propheticae et apostolicae interpretationis linea secundum ecclesiastici et Catholici sensus normam dirigatur. Vincent. Lirinens. in Commonitor.*

upon a distinct stock, such articles whereof there is no mention and proposition in Scripture. And in this topic, not only the distinct articles are clear and plain, like as the fundamentals of faith expressed in Scripture, but also it pretends to expound Scripture, and to determine questions with so much clarity and certainty, as there shall neither be error nor doubt remaining, and therefore no disagreeing is here to be endured. And indeed it is most true if tradition can perform these pretensions, and teach us plainly, and assure us infallibly of all truths, which they require us to believe, we can in this case have no reason to disbelieve them, and therefore are certainly heretics if we do, because without a crime, without some human interest or collateral design, we cannot disbelieve traditive doctrine or traditive interpretation, if it be infallibly proved to us that tradition is an infallible guide.

But here I first consider that tradition is no repository of articles of faith, and therefore the not following it is no argument of heresy; for besides that I have shewed Scripture in its plain expresses to be an abundant rule of faith and manners, tradition is a topic as fallible as any other; so fallible that it cannot be sufficient evidence to any man in a matter of faith or question of heresy.

For 1. I find that the fathers were infinitely deceived in their account and enumeration of traditions, sometimes they did call some traditions, such, not which they knew to be so, but by arguments and presumptions they concluded them so. Such as was that of St. Austin. "What is held by the universal church, not as instituted by councils, may be considered as derived from

apostolic tradition.”* Now suppose this rule probable, that is the most, yet it is not certain; it might come by custom, whose original was not known, but yet could not derive from an apostolical principle. Now when they conclude of particular traditions by a general rule, and that general rule not certain, but at the most probable in any thing, and certainly false in some things, it is wonder if the productions, that is, their judgements, and pretence fail so often. And if I should but instance in all the particulars, in which tradition was pretended falsely or uncertainly in the first ages, I should multiply them to a troublesome variety; for it was then accounted so glorious a thing to have spoken with the persons of the Apostles, that if any man could with any colour pretend to it, he might abuse the whole church, and obtrude what he listed under the specious title of apostolical tradition, and it is very notorious to every man that will but read and observe the recognitions or stromata of Clemens Alexandrinus, where there is enough of such false wares shewed in every book, and pretended to be no less than from the Apostles. In the first age after the Apostles, Papias pretended he received a tradition from the Apostles, that Christ before the day of Judgment should reign a thousand years upon earth, and his Saints with him in temporal felicities; and this thing proceeding from so great an authority as the testimony of Papias, drew after it all or most of the Christians in the first three hundred years. For besides that, the millenary

* *Ea quæ universalis tenet Ecclesia nec à conciliis instituta reperiuntur, credibile est ab apostolorum traditione decendisse.* Epist. 118. ad Ianuar. De bapt. contr. Donat. lib. 4. c. 24.

opinion is expressly taught by Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Origen, Lactantius, Severus, Victorinus, Appollinaris, Nepos, and divers others famous in their time, Justin Martyr in his dialogue against Tryphon says, it was the belief of all Christians exactly orthodox, *καὶ εἰ τίνες εἰσὶ χρι πάντα ὀρθογνώμοτες Χριστιανοί*, and yet there was no such tradition, but a mistake in Papias; but I find it no were spoke against, till Dionysius of Alexandria confuted Nepo's book, and converted Coracion the Egyptian from the opinion. Now if a tradition whose beginning of being called so, began with a scholar of the Apostles (for so was Papias) and then continued for some ages upon the mere authority of so famous a man, did yet deceive the church: much more fallible is the pretence, when two or three hundred years after, it but commences, and then by some learned man is first called a tradition apostolical. And so it happened in the case of the Arian heresy, which the Nicene Fathers did confute by objecting a contrary tradition apostolical, as Theodoret reports;* and yet if they had not had better arguments from Scripture than from tradition, they would have failed much in so good a cause; for this very pretence the Arians themselves made, and desired to be tried by the Fathers of the first three hundred years,† which was a confutation sufficient to them who pretend a clear tradition, because it was unimaginable that the tradition should leap so as not to come from the first to the last by the middle. But that this trial was sometime declined by that excellent man St. Athanasius, although at other times confidently and truly

* Lib. 1. hist. c. 8.

† Vide Petav. in Epiph. her. 69.

pretended, it was an argument the tradition was not so clear,* but both sides might with some fairness pretend to it. And therefore one of the prime founders of their heresy, the heretic † Artemon having observed the advantage might be taken by any sect that would pretend tradition, because the medium was plausible and consisting of so many particulars, that it was hard to be redargued, pretended a tradition from the Apostles, that Christ was *ψίλος άνθρωπος*, and that the tradition did descend by a constant succession in the church of Rome to Pope Victor's time inclusively, and till Zepherinus had interrupted the series and corrupted the doctrine; which pretence if it had not had some appearance of truth, so as possibly to abuse the church, had not been worthy of confutation, which yet was with care undertaken by an old writer, out of whom Eusebius transcribes a large passage to reprove the vanity of the pretender. But I observe from hence, that it was usual to pretend to tradition, and that it was easier pretended than confuted, and I doubt not but oftner done than discovered. A great question arose in Africa concerning the Baptism of heretics, whether it were valid or no. St. Cyprian and his party appealed to Scripture; Stephen, Bishop of Rome, and his party, would be judged by custom and tradition ecclesiastical. See how much the nearer the question was to a determination, either that probation was not accounted by St. Cyprian, and the Bishops both of Asia and

* και γὰρ εἰς τίνες ὦ φίλοι ἔλεγον ἀπὸ τῆ ἡμετέρας γένεσις ὁμολογούντες αὐτὸν Χριστὸν εἶδα, ἄνθρωπον· χεῖρ δὲ ἀνθρώπων γονόμενον ἀποφαινόμενοι, οἷς ἐσμεν τῷθεμαι, ἔδε αὖ πλείους ταῦτα μοι δοξάσαντες ἔποιεν, Justin Mart. dial ad Tryph. lud.

† Euse. l. 5. c. ult.

Africa, to be a good argument, and sufficient to determine them, or there was no certain tradition against them; for unless one of these two do it, nothing could excuse them from opposing a known truth, unless peradventure, St. Cyprian, Firmilian, the Bishops of Galatia, Cappadocia, and almost two parts of the world were ignorant of such a tradition, for they knew of none such, and some of them expressly denied it. And the sixth general synod approves of the canon made in the council of Carthage under Cyprian upon this very ground, because "it is universally observed, in exact conformity to the custom handed down by tradition,"* they had a particular tradition for rebaptization, and therefore there could be no tradition universal against it, or if there were, they knew not of it, but much for the contrary; and then it would be remembered that a concealed tradition was like a silent thunder, or a law not promulgated; it neither was known, nor was obligatory. And I shall observe this too, that this very tradition was so obscure, and was so obscurely delivered, silently proclaimed, that St. Austin,† who disputed against the Donatists upon this very question, was not able to prove it, but by a consequence which he thought probable and credible, as appears in his discourse against the Donatists. The Apostles, saith St. Austin, *prescribed nothing in this particular: but this custom which is contrary to Cyprian ought to be believed to have come from their tradition, as many other things which the Catholic Church observes.* That's all the ground and all the reason; nay, the church did

* Prædictorum præsulem locis et solum secundum traditam eis consuetudinem servatus est. Can. 2.

† L. 5. de baptism. contr. Donat. c. 23.

waver concerning that question, and before the decision of a council, Cyprian* and others might dissent without breach of charity. It was plain then there was no clear tradition in the question, possibly there might be a custom in some churches *postnate* to the times of the Apostles, but nothing that was obligatory, no tradition apostolical. But this was a suppletory device ready at hand whenever they needed it; and St. Austin† confuted the Pelagians, in the question of original sin, by the custom of exorcism and insufflation, which St. Austin said came from the Apostles by tradition, which yet was then, and is now so impossible to be proved, that he that shall affirm it, shall gain only the reputation of a bold man and a confident.

2. I consider, if the report of traditions in the primitive times so near the ages apostolical was so uncertain, that they were fain to aim at them by conjectures, and grope as in the dark, the uncertainty is much increased since, because there are many famous writers whose works are lost, which yet if they had continued, they might have been good records to us, as Clemens Romanus, Egesippus, Nepos, Coracion, Dionysius Areopagite, of Alexandria, of Corinth, Firmilian, and many more: and since we see pretences have been made without reason in those ages where they might better have been confuted, than now they can, it is greater prudence to suspect any later pretences, since so many sects have been, so many wars, so many corruptions in authors, so many authors lost, so much ignorance hath intervened, and so many

* Lib. 1. de baptism. c. 18.

† De peccat. original, l. 2. c. 40. contra Pelagi. et Cælest.

interests have been served, that now the rule is to be altered; and whereas it was of old time credible, that that was apostolical whose beginning they knew not, now quite contrary, we cannot safely believe them to be apostolical unless we do know their beginning to have been from the Apostles. For this consisting of probabilities and particulars, which put together make up a moral demonstration, the argument which I now urge hath been growing these fifteen hundred years; and if anciently there was so much as to evacuate the authority of tradition, much more is there now absolutely to destroy it, when all the particulars, which time and infinite variety of humane accidents have been amassing together, are now concentered, and are united by way of constipation. Because every age and every great change, and every heresy, and every interest, hath increased the difficulty of finding out true traditions.

3. There are very many traditions which are lost, and yet they are concerning matters of as great consequence as most of those questions for the determination whereof traditions are pretended: it is more than probable, that as in Baptism and the Eucharist, the very forms of ministration are transmitted to us, so also in confirmation and ordination, and that there were special directions for visitation of the sick, and explicit interpretations of those difficult places of St. Paul which St. Peter affirmed to be so difficult, that the ignorant do wrest them to their own damnation, and yet no such church hath conserved these or those many more which St. Basil affirms to be so many that *επιλείπει ημῆρα τὰ ἀγράφα της*

ἐκκλησίας μυστήρια διηγόμενον;* the day would fail him in the very simple enumeration of all traditions ecclesiastical. And if the church hath failed in keeping the great variety of traditions, it will hardly be thought a fault in a private person to neglect tradition, which either the whole church hath very much neglected inculpably, or else the whole church is very much to blame. And who can ascertain us that she hath not entertained some which are no traditions as well as lost thousands that are? That she did entertain some false traditions, I have already proved; but it is also as probable that some of those which these ages did propound for traditions, are not so, as it is certain that some which the first ages called traditions, were nothing less.

4. There are some opinions, which when they began to be publicly received, began to be accounted prime traditions, and so became such not by a native title, but by adoption; and nothing is more usual than for the fathers to colour their popular opinion with so great an appellative. St. Austin called the communicating of infants an apostolical tradition, and yet we do not practise it, because we disbelieve the allegation. And that every custom which at first introduction was but a private fancy or singular practice, grew afterwards into a public rite, and went for a tradition after a while continuance, appears by Tertullian, who seems to justify it,† You do not think it lawful for any Christian to appoint for discipline and salvation whatever he may deem well pleasing to God, *Non enim existimas tu licitum esse cuicunque fidei constituere quod Deo placere illi visum*

* Cap. 29. de spir. Sancto.

† Contra Marcion.

*fuerit, ad disciplinam et salutem.** And again, whoever may introduce a tradition, you should not regard the author but the authority, *A quocunque traditore censetur, nec authorem respicias sed auctoritatem.†* And St. Jerome most plainly, the regulations of the fathers are to be regarded as apostolical traditions, *Præcepta majorum apostolicas traditiones quisque existimat.* And when Irenæus had observed that great variety in the keeping of Lent, which yet to be a forty days fast is pretended to descend from tradition apostolical, some fasting but one day before Easter, some two, some forty, and this even long before Irenæus's time, he gives this reason, that variety of fasting originated with our fathers, who did not accurately observe their custom, who either from simplicity or personal authority, were for ordaining rites for their posterity, *varietas illa jejunii coepit apud majores nostros qui non accurate consuetudinum eorum qui vel simplicitate quâdam vel privatâ auctoritate in posterum aliquid statuisent, observarant.* And there are yet some points of good concernment, which if any man should question in a high manner, they would prove indeterminable by Scripture, or sufficient reason, and yet I doubt not their confident defenders would say they are opinions of the church, and quickly pretend a tradition from the very Apostles, and believe themselves so secure that they could not be discovered, because the question never having been disputed, gives them occasion to say that which had no beginning known, was certainly from the Apostles. For why should not divines do in the question of reconfirmation as in that of rebaptiza-

* De coron. milit. c. 3, et 4.

† Apud Euseb. l. 5. c. 24.

tion? Are not the grounds equal from an indelible character in one as in the other? and if it happen such a question as this after contestation should be determined not by any positive decree, but by the cession of one part, and the authority and reputation of the other, does not the next age stand fair to be abused with a pretence of tradition, in the matter of reconfirmation, which never yet came to a serious question? For so it was in the question of rebaptization for which there was then no more evident tradition than there is now in the question of reconfirmation, as I proved formerly, but yet it was carried upon that title.

5. There is great variety in the probation of tradition, so that whatever is proved to be tradition, is not equally and alike credible; for nothing but universal tradition is of itself credible; other traditions in their just proportion as they partake of the degrees of universality. Now that a tradition be universal, or which is all one that it be a credible testimony, St. Irenæus* requires that tradition should derive from all the churches apostolical. And therefore according to this rule, there was no sufficient medium to determine the question about Easter, because the eastern and western churches had several traditions respectively, and both pretended from the Apostles. Clemens Alexandrinus† says, it was a secret tradition from the Apostles that Christ preached but one year: but Irenæus‡ says it did derive from heretics, and says that he by tradition first from St. John, and then from his disciples received another tradition, that Christ was almost fifty years old when he died, and so by consequence

* Lib. 3. c. 4.

† Li. 1. Stromat.

‡ L. 2. c. 39.

preached almost twenty years; both of them were deceived, and so had all that had believed the report of either pretending tradition apostolical. Thus the custom in the Latin Church of fasting on Saturday was against that tradition which the Greeks had from the Apostles; and therefore by this division and want of consent, which was the true tradition was so absolutely indeterminable, that both must needs lose much of their reputation. But how then when not only particular churches but single persons are all the proof we have for a tradition? And this often happened; I think St. Austin* is the chief argument and authority we have for the Assumption of the Virgin Mary; the baptism of infants is called a tradition by Origen alone at first, and from him by others. The procession of the Holy Ghost from the Son, which is an article the Greek Church disavows, derives from the tradition apostolical, as it is pretended; and yet before St. Austin we hear nothing of it very clearly or certainly, forasmuch as that whole mystery concerning the blessed Spirit was so little explicated in Scripture, and so little derived to them by tradition, that till the council of Nice, you shall hardly find any form of worship or personal address of devotion to the Holy Spirit, as Erasmus observes, and I think the contrary will very hardly be verified. And for this particular in which I instance, whatsoever is in Scripture concerning it, is against that which the church of Rome calls tradition, which makes the Greeks so confident as they are of the point, and is an argument of the vanity of some things which for no greater reason are called traditions, but

* Salmeron disput. 51. in Rom.

because one man hath said so, and that they can be proved by no better argument to be true. Now in this case wherein tradition descends upon us with unequal certainty, it would be very unequal to require of us an absolute belief of every thing not written, for fear we be accounted to slight tradition apostolical. And since nothing can require our supreme assent, but that which is truly Catholic and Apostolic, and to such a tradition is required as Irenæus says, the consent of all those churches which the Apostles planted, and where they did preside, this topic will be of so little use in judging heresies, that (besides what is deposited in Scripture) it cannot be proved in any thing but in the canon of Scripture itself, and as it is now received, even in that there is some variety.

And therefore there is wholly a mistake in this business ; for when the fathers appeal to tradition, and with much earnestness, and some clamour, they call upon heretics to conform to or to be tried by tradition, it is such a tradition as delivers the fundamental points of Christianity, which were also recorded in Scripture. But because the canon was not yet perfectly consigned, they called to that testimony they had, which was the testimony of the churches apostolical, whose bishops and priests being the oracles of religion, *antistites religionis*, did believe and preach the Christian religion, and conserve all its great mysteries according as they had been taught. Irenæus calls this a tradition apostolical, that Christ took the cup and said it was his own blood, and taught the new oblation of the New Testament, which the church receiving from the Apostles, communicates to the whole world, *Christum accepisse calicem, et dixisse sanguinem suum esse, et docuisse novam*

oblationem novi Testamenti, quam ecclesia per Apostolos accipiens offert per totum mundum. And the fathers in these ages confute heretics by ecclesiastical tradition, that is, they confront against their impious and blasphemous doctrines that religion which the Apostles having taught to the churches where they did preside, their successors did still preach, and for a long while together suffered not the enemy to sow tares amongst their wheat. And yet these doctrines which they called traditions, were nothing but such fundamental truths which were in Scripture, all coincident with the sacred writings, πάντα σύμφωνα ταῖς γραφαῖς, as Irenæus in Eusebius observes, in the instance of Polycarpus, and it is manifest by considering what heresies they fought against, the heresies of Ebion, Cerinthus, Nicolaitans, Valentinians, Carpocratians,* persons that denied the Son of God, the unity of the Godhead, that preached impurity, that practised sorcery and witchcraft. And now that they did rather urge tradition against them than Scripture, was, because the public doctrine of all the Apostolical Churches was at first more known and famous than many parts of the Scripture, and because some heretics denied St. Luke's gospel, some received none but St. Matthew's, some rejected all St. Paul's epistles, and it was a long time before the whole canon was consigned by universal testimony, some churches having one part some another, Rome herself had not all, so that in this case the argument from tradition was the most famous, the most certain, and the most prudent. And now according to this rule they had more traditions than we have, and traditions

* Vid. Irenæ. l. 3. et 4. cont. hæres.

did by degrees lessen as they came to be written, and their necessity was less, as the knowledge of them was ascertained to us by a better keeper of divine truths. All that great mysteriousness of Christ's priesthood, the unity of his sacrifice, Christ's advocacy and intercession for us in heaven, and many other excellent doctrines might very well be accounted traditions before St. Paul's epistle to the Hebrews was published to all the world; but now they are written truths; and if they had not, possibly we might either have lost them quite, or doubted of them as we do of many other traditions, by reason of the insufficiency of the propounder. And therefore it was that St. Peter* took order that the gospel should be writ, for he had promised that he would do something which after his decease should have these things in remembrance. He knew it was not safe trusting the report of men where the fountain might quickly run dry, or be corrupted so insensibly, that no cure could be found for it, nor any just notice taken of it till it were incurable. And indeed there is scarce any thing but what is written in Scripture, that can with any confidence of argument pretend to derive from the Apostles, except rituals and manners of ministration; but no doctrines or speculative mysteries are so transmitted to us by so clear a current, that we may see a visible channel, and trace it to the primitive fountains. It is said to be a tradition apostolical, that no priest should baptise without chrism and the command of the bishop: suppose it were, yet we cannot be obliged to believe it with much confidence, because we have but little proof for it,

scarce any thing but the single testimony of St. Jerome.* And yet if it were, this is but a ritual; of which in passing by, I shall give that account: that, suppose this and many more rituals did derive clearly from tradition apostolical, (which yet but very few do) yet it is hard that any church should be charged with crime for not observing such rituals, because we see some of them which certainly did derive from the Apostles, are expired and gone out in a desuetude; such as are abstinence from blood, and from things strangled, the cœnôbitic life of secular persons, the college of widows, to worship standing upon the Lord's day, to give milk and honey to the newly baptised, and many more of the like nature; now there having been no mark to distinguish the necessity of one from the indifference of the other, they are all alike necessary, or alike indifferent; if the former, why does no church observe them? if the latter, why does the church of Rome charge upon others the shame of novelty, for leaving of some rites and ceremonies which by her own practice we are taught to have no obligation in them, but to be adiaphorous? St. Paul gave order, that a bishop should be the husband of one wife; the church of Rome will not allow so much; other churches allow more: the Apostles commanded Christians to fast on Wednesday and Friday, as appears in their canons; the church of Rome fasts Friday and Saturday, and not on Wednesday: the Apostles had their agapæ or love feasts, we should believe them scandalous: they used a kiss of charity in ordinary addresses, the church of Rome keeps it only in their mass, other churches quite omit it: the Apostles permitted

* Dialog. adv. Lucifer.

priests and deacons to live in conjugal society as appears in the 5 can. of the Apostles, (which to them is an argument who believe them such) and yet the church of Rome, by no means will endure it; nay more, Michael Medina* gives testimony, that of 84 canons apostolical which Clemens collected, scarce six or eight are observed by the Latin Church, and Peresius gives this account of it, "among these there are many which, owing to the corruption of the times are not fully observed, others are rejected on account either of the times or the nature of them, or by the authority of the church." *In illis contineri multa quæ temporum corruptione non plenè observantur, aliis pro temporis et materiæ qualitate aut oblitteratis, aut totius ecclesiæ magisterio abrogatis.* Now it were good that they which take a liberty to themselves, should also allow the same to others. So that for one thing or other, all traditions excepting those very few that are absolutely universal, will lose all their obligation, and become no competent medium to confine men's practices or limit their faiths, or determine their persuasions. Either for the difficulty of their being proved, the incompetency of the testimony that transmits them, or the indifferency of the thing transmitted, all traditions both ritual and doctrinal, are disabled from determining our consciences either to a necessary believing or obeying.

6. To which I add by way of confirmation, that there are some things called traditions, and are offered to be proved to us by a testimony, which is either false or not extant. Clemens of Alexan-

* De sacr. hom. continent. lib. 5. c. 105.

† De tradit. part. 3. c. de author. can. apost.

dria pretended it a tradition that the Apostles preached to them that died in infidelity, even after their death, and then raised them to life, but he proved it only by the testimony of the book of Hermes; he affirmed it to be a tradition apostolical, that the Greeks were saved by their philosophy, but he had no other authority for it but the Apocryphal books of Peter and Paul. Tertullian and St. Basil, pretend it an apostolical tradition, to sign in the air with the sign of the cross, but this was only consigned to them in the gospel of Nicodemus. But to instance once for all, in the epistle of Marcellus to the Bishop of Antioch, where he affirms that it is the canon of the Apostles, "that councils cannot be held without the authority of the Roman pontiff." *Præter sententiam Romani pontificis, non posse concilia celebrari.* And yet there is no such canon extant, nor ever was for ought, appears, in any record we have; and yet the collection of the canons is so entire, that though it hath something more than what was apostolical, yet it hath nothing less. And now that I am casually fallen upon an instance from the canons of the Apostles, I consider that there cannot in the world a greater instance be given how easy it is to be abused in the believing of traditions. For to the first fifty, which many did admit for apostolical, thirty-five more were added, which most men now count spurious, all men call dubious, and some of them universally condemned by peremptory sentence, even by them who are greatest admirers of that collection, as sixty-five, sixty-seven, and the eighty-fourth and fifth canons. For the first fifty, it is evident that there are some things so mixed with them, and no mark of difference left, that the credit of all is

much impaired, insomuch that Isidor* of Seville says, "they were apocryphal, made by heretics, and published under the title Apostolical, but neither the Fathers, nor the church of Rome did give assent to them." And yet they have prevailed so far amongst some, that Damascen† is of opinion they should be received equally with the canonical writings of the Apostles. One thing only I observe (and we shall find it true in most writings, whose authority is urged in questions of Theology) that the authority of the tradition is not it which moves the assent, but the nature of the thing; and because such a canon is delivered, they do not therefore believe the sanction or proposition so delivered, but disbelieve the tradition, if they do not like the matter, and so do not judge of the matter by the tradition, but of the tradition by the matter. And thus the church of Rome rejects the eighty-fourth or eighty-fifth canon of the Apostles, not because it is delivered with less authority than the last thirty-five are, but because it reckons the canon of Scripture otherwise than it is at Rome. Thus also the fifth canon amongst the first fifty, because it approves the marriage of Priests and Deacons does not persuade them to approve of it too, but itself becomes suspected for approving it: so that either they accuse themselves of palpable contempt of the apostolical authority, or else that the reputation of such traditions is kept up to serve their own ends, and therefore, when they encounter them, they are more to be upheld; which what else is it but to teach all the world to condemn such pretences

* Apud Gratian. dist. 16. c. Canones.

† Lib. 1. c. 18. de. Orthod. fide,

and undervalue traditions, and to supply to others a reason why they should do that, which to them that give the occasion is most unreasonable?

7. The testimony of the ancient church being the only means of proving tradition, and sometimes their dictates and doctrine being the tradition pretended of necessity to be imitated, it is considerable that men in their estimate of it, take their rise from several ages and differing testimonies, and are not agreed about the competency of their testimony; and the reasons that on each side make them differ, are such as make the authority itself the less authentic and more repudiable. Some will allow only of the three first ages, as being most pure, most persecuted, and therefore most holy, least interested, serving fewer designs, having fewest factions, and therefore more likely to speak the truth for God's sake, and its own, as best complying with their great end of acquiring heaven in recompense of losing their lives: others say,* that those ages being persecuted minded the present doctrines proportionable to their purposes and constitution of the ages, and make little or nothing of those questions which at this day vex Christendom: and both speak true: the first ages speak greatest truth, but least pertinently. The next ages, the ages of the four general councils spake something, not much more pertinently to the present questions, but were not so likely to speak true, by reason of their dispositions contrary to the capacity and circumstance of the first ages; and if they speak wisely as Doctors, yet not certainly as witnesses of such propositions which the first ages noted not; and yet unless they had

* Vid. Card. Porron. lettre au Sieur Casaubon.

noted, could not possibly be traditions. And therefore, either of them will be less useful as to our present affairs. For indeed the questions which now are the public trouble, were not considered or thought upon for many hundred years, and therefore prime tradition there is none as to our purpose, and it will be an insufficient medium to be used or pretended in the determination; and to dispute concerning the truth or necessity of traditions, in the questions of our times, is as if historians disputing about a question in the English story, should fall on wrangling whether Livy or Plutarch were the best writers: and the earnest disputes about traditions are to no better purpose. For no church at this day admits the one half of those things, which certainly by the Fathers were called traditions apostolical, and no testimony of ancient writers does consign the one half of the present questions, to be or not to be traditions. So that they who admit only the doctrine and testimony of the first ages cannot be determined in most of their doubts which now trouble us, because their writings are of matters wholly differing from the present disputes, and they which would bring in after ages to the authority of a competent judge or witness, say the same thing; for they plainly confess that the first ages spake little or nothing to the present question, or at least nothing to their sense of them; for therefore they call in aid from the following ages, and make them suppletory and auxiliary to their designs, and therefore there are no traditions to our purposes. And they who would willingly have it otherwise, yet have taken no course it should be otherwise; for they, when they had opportunity in the councils of the last ages to determine what they

had a mind to, yet they never named the number, nor expressed the particular traditions which they would fain have the world believe to be apostolical; but they have kept the bridle in their own hands, and made a reserve of their own power, that if need be, they may make new pretensions, or not be put to it to justify the old by the engagement of a conciliary declaration.

Lastly, we are acquitted by the testimony of the primitive Fathers, from any other necessity of believing, than of such articles as are recorded in Scripture: and this is done by them, whose authority is pretended the greatest argument for tradition, as appears largely in Irenæus,* who disputes professedly for the sufficiency of Scripture against certain heretics, who affirm some necessary truths not to be written. It was an excellent saying of St. Basil, and will never be whipped out with all the eloquence of Perron, in his *Serm. de fide*. “It is a manifest departure from the faith, and mere superciliousness, either to reject what is taught in Scripture, or to introduce any thing that is not written there.” *Manifestus est fidei lapsus, et liquidum superbiæ vitium vel respuere aliquid eorum quæ Scripturæ habet, vel inducere quicquam quod scriptum non est.* And it is but a poor device, to say, that every particular tradition is consigned in Scripture by those places which give authority to tradition; and so the introducing of tradition is not a super-inducing any thing over or besides Scripture, because tradition is like a messenger, and the Scripture is like his letters of credence, and therefore authorizes whatsoever tradition speaketh. For supposing Scripture does

* L. 3. c. 2. contr. hæres.

consign the authority of tradition (which it might do before all the whole instrument of Scripture itself was consigned, and then afterwards there might be no need of tradition) yet supposing it, it will follow that all those traditions which are truly prime and apostolical, are to be entertained according to the intention of the deliverers, which indeed is so reasonable of itself, that we need not Scripture to persuade us to it; itself is authentic as Scripture is, if it derives from the same fountain; and a word is never the more the word of God for being written, nor the less for not being written; but it will not follow that whatsoever is pretended to be tradition, is so, neither is the credit of the particular instances consigned in Scripture; cunning is employed in generalising, *et dolosus versator in generalibus*; but this craft is too palpable. And if a general and indefinite consignation of tradition be sufficient to warrant every particular that pretends to be tradition, then St. Basil had spoken to no purpose by saying it is pride and apostasy from the faith, to bring in what is not written: for if either any man brings in what is written, or what he says is delivered, then the first being express Scripture, and the second being consigned in Scripture, no man can be charged with superinducing what is not written, he hath his answer ready; and then these are zealous words absolutely to no purpose; but if such general consignation does not warrant every thing that pretends to tradition, but only such as are truly proved to be apostolical; then Scripture is useless as to this particular; for such tradition gives testimony to Scripture, and therefore it is of itself first, and more credible, for it is credible of itself; and therefore unless St. Basil

thought that all the will of God in matters of faith and doctrine were written, I see not what end nor what sense he could have in these words: for no man in the world except enthusiasts and mad-men, ever obtruded a doctrine upon the church, but he pretended Scripture for it, or tradition, and therefore no man could be pressed by these words, no man confuted, no man instructed, no not enthusiasts or Montanists. For suppose either of them should say, that since in Scripture the Holy Ghost is promised to abide with the church for ever, to teach, whatever they pretend the Spirit in any age hath taught them, is not to superinduce any thing beyond what is written, because the truth of the Spirit, his veracity, and his perpetual teaching being promised and attested in Scripture, Scripture hath just so consigned all such revelations, as Perron saith, it hath all such traditions. But I will trouble myself no more with arguments from any human authorities; but he that is surprised with the belief of such authorities, and will but consider the very many testimonies of antiquity to this purpose, as of Constantine,* St. Jerome,† St. Austin,‡ St. Athanasius,§ St. Hilary,|| St. Epiphanius,** and divers others, all speaking words to the same sense, with that saying of St. Paul,†† “Not to think above that which is written,” *Nemo sentiat super quod scriptam est*; will see that there is reason, that since no man is materially

* Orat. ad Nicen. pp. apud. Theodor. l. 1. c. 7.

† In Matth. l. 4. c. 23. et in Aggæum.

‡ De bono viduil, c 1.

§ Orat. contr. gent.

|| In Psa. 132.

** L. 2. contra. heres. tom. 1. hæ. 61.

†† 1. Cor. 4. 6.

a heretic, but he that errs in a point of faith, and all faith is sufficiently recorded in Scripture, the judgment of faith and heresy is to be derived from thence, and no man is to be condemned for dissenting in an article for whose probation tradition only is pretended; only according to the degree of its evidence, let every one determine himself, but of this evidence we must not judge for others; for unless it be in things of faith, and absolute certainties, evidence is a word of relation, and so supposes two terms, the object and the faculty; and it is an imperfect speech, to say, a thing is evident in itself (unless we speak of first principles or clearest revelations) for that may be evident to one that is not so to another, by reason of the pregnancy of some apprehensions, and the immaturity of others.

This discourse hath its intention in traditions doctrinal and ritual, that is, such traditions which propose articles new *in materia*; but now, if Scripture be the repository of all divine truths sufficient for us, tradition must be considered as its instrument, to convey its great mysteriousness to our understandings; it is said there are traditive interpretations as well as traditive propositions, but these have not much distinct consideration in them, both because their uncertainty is as great as the other upon the former considerations; as also because in very deed, there are no such things as traditive interpretations universal: for as for particulars, they signify no more, but that they are not sufficient determinations of questions theological, therefore, because they are particular, contingent, and of infinite variety, and they are no more arguments, than the particular authority of these

men whose commentaries they are, and therefore must be considered with them.

The sum is this: since the Fathers who are the best witnesses of traditions, yet were infinitely deceived in their account, since sometimes they guessed at them and conjectured by way of rule and discourse, and not of their knowledge, not by evidence of the thing; since many are called traditions which were not so, many are uncertain whether they were or no, yet confidently pretended; and this uncertainty which at first was great enough, is increased by infinite causes and accidents in the succession of 1,600 years; since the church hath been either so careless or so abused, that she could not, or would not preserve traditions with carefulness and truth; since it was ordinary for the old writers to set out their own fancies, and the rites of their church which had been ancient, under the specious title of apostolical traditions; since some traditions rely but upon single testimony at first, and yet descending upon others, come to be attested by many, whose testimony though conjunct, yet in value is but single, because it relies upon the first single relator, and so can have no greater authority, or certainty, than they derive from the single person; since the first ages who were most competent to consign tradition, yet did consign such traditions as be of a nature wholly discrepant from the present questions, and speak nothing at all, or very imperfectly to our purposes; and the following ages are no fit witnesses of that which was not transmitted to them, because they could not know it at all, but by such transmission and prior consignation; since what at first was a tradition, came afterwards to

be written, and so ceased its being a tradition; yet the credit of traditions commenced upon the certainty and reputation of those truths first delivered by word, afterward consigned by writing; since what was certainly tradition apostolical, as many rituals were, are rejected by the church in several ages, and are gone out into a desuetude; and lastly, since, beside the no necessity of traditions, there being abundantly enough in Scripture, there are many things called traditions by the Fathers, which they themselves either proved by no authors, or by apocryphal and spurious and heretical, the matter of tradition will in very much be so uncertain, so false, so suspicious, so contradictory, so improbable, so unproved, that if a question be contested and be offered to be proved only by tradition, it will be very hard to impose such a proposition to the belief of all men with any imperiousness or resolved determination, but it will be necessary men should preserve the Liberty of believing and Prophesying, and not part with it, upon a worse merchandise and exchange than Esau made for his birthright.

SECTION VI.

Of the uncertainty and insufficiency of Councils Ecclesiastical to the same purpose.

BUT since we are all this while in uncertainty, it is necessary that we should address ourselves somewhere, where we may rest the sole of our foot: and nature, Scripture, and experience teach

the world in matters of question to submit to some final sentence. For it is not reason that controversies should continue till the erring person shall be willing to condemn himself; and the Spirit of God hath directed us by that great precedent at Jerusalem, to address ourselves to the church, that in a plenary council and assembly, she may synodically determine controversies. So that if a general council have determined a question, or expounded Scripture, we may no more disbelieve the decree, than the Spirit of God himself who speaks in them. And indeed, if all assemblies of bishops were like that first, and all bishops were of the same spirit of which the Apostles were, I should obey their decree with the same religion as I do them whose preface was, "it seemeth good to the Holy Spirit and to us," *visum est Spiritui Sancto et nobis*: and I doubt not but our blessed Saviour intended that the assemblies of the church should be judges of controversies, and guides of our persuasions in matters of difficulty. But he also intended they should proceed according to his will which he had revealed, and those precedents which he had made authentic by the immediate assistance of his holy Spirit: he hath done his part, but we do not do our's. And if any private person in the simplicity and purity of his soul desires to find out a truth of which he is in search and inquisition, if he prays for wisdom, we have a promise he shall be heard and answered liberally, and therefore much more, when the representatives of the Catholic church do meet, because, every person there hath *in individuo* a title to the promise, and another title as he is a governor and a guide of souls, and all of them together have another title in their united capacity, especially,

if in that union they pray, and proceed with simplicity and purity; so that there is no disputing against the pretence and promises, and authority of general councils. For if any one man can hope to be guided by God's Spirit in the search, the pious and impartial and unprejudicate search of truth, then much more may a general council. If no private man can hope for it, then truth is not necessary to be found, nor we are not obliged to search for it, or else we are saved by chance: but if private men can by virtue of a promise, upon certain conditions, be assured of finding out sufficient truth, much more shall a general council. So that I consider thus: there are many promises pretended to belong to general assemblies in the church; but I know not any ground, nor any pretence, that they shall be absolutely assisted, without any condition on their own parts, and whether they will or no: faith is a virtue as well as charity, and therefore consists in liberty and choice, and hath nothing in it of necessity: there is no question but that they are obliged to proceed according to some rule; for they expect no assistance by way of enthusiasm; if they should, I know no warrant for that, neither did any general council ever offer a decree which they did not think sufficiently proved by Scripture, reason, or tradition, as appears in the acts of the councils; now then, if they be tied to conditions, it is their duty to observe them; but whether it be certain that they will observe them, that they will do all their duty, that they will not sin even in this particular in the neglect of their duty, that is the consideration. So that if any man questions the title and authority of general councils, and whether or no great promises appertain to them, I suppose him

to be much mistaken; but he also that thinks all of them have proceeded according to rule and reason, and that none of them were deceived, because possibly they might have been truly directed, is a stranger to the history of the church, and to the perpetual instances and experiments of the faults and failings of humanity. It is a famous saying of St. Gregory, that he had the four first councils in esteem and veneration next to the four Evangelists; I suppose it was because he did believe them to have proceeded according to rule, and to have judged righteous judgment; but why had not he the same opinion of other councils too which were celebrated before his death, for he lived after the fifth general? not because they had not the same authority; for that which is warrant for one is warrant for all; but because he was not so confident that they did their duty nor proceeded so without interest as the first four had done, and the following councils did never get that reputation which all the Catholic Church acknowledged due to the first four. And in the next order were the three following generals; for the Greeks and Latins did never jointly acknowledge but seven generals to have been authentic in any sense, because they were in no sense agreed that any more than seven had proceeded regularly and done their duty: so that now the question is not whether general councils have a promise that the Holy Ghost will assist them; for every private man hath that promise, that if he does his duty he shall be assisted sufficiently in order to that end to which he needs assistance; and therefore much more shall general councils in order to that end for which they convene, and to which they need assistance, that is, in order to the conservation of the faith,

for the doctrinal rules of good life, and all that concerns the essential duty of a Christian, but not in deciding questions to satisfy contentious, or curious or presumptuous spirits. But now can the bishops so convened be factious, can they be abused with prejudice, or transported with interests, can they resist the Holy Ghost, can they extinguish the Spirit, can they stop their ears, and serve themselves upon the Holy Spirit and the pretence of his assistances, and cease to serve him upon themselves, by captivating their understandings to his dictates, and their wills to his precepts? Is it necessary they should perform any condition? is there any one duty for them to perform in these assemblies, a duty which they have power to do or not do? If so, then they may fail of it, and not do their duty: and if the assistance of the Holy Spirit be conditional, then we have no more assurance that they are assisted, than that they do their duty and do not sin.

Now let us suppose what this duty is: certainly, if the gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; and all that come to the knowledge of the truth, must come to it by such means which are spiritual and holy dispositions, in order to a holy and spiritual end. They must be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, that is, they must have peaceable and docible dispositions, nothing with them that is violent and resolute to encounter those gentle and sweet assistances: and the rule they are to follow, is the rule which the holy Spirit hath consigned to the Catholic Church, that is the holy Scripture, either * entirely or at least for the

* Vid. Optat. Milev. l. 5. adv. Parm. Baldwin. in eundem. et St. August. in Psal. 21. Expos. 2.

greater part of the rule : so that now if the bishops be factious and prepossessed with persuasions depending upon interest, it is certain they may judge amiss; and if they recede from the rule, it is certain they do judge amiss : and this I say upon their grounds who most advance the authority of general councils: for if a general council may err, if a pope confirm it not, then most certainly if in any thing it recede from Scripture, it does also err; because that they are to expect the pope's confirmation they offer to prove from Scripture : now if the pope's confirmation be required by authority of Scripture, and that therefore the defailance of it does evacuate the authority of the council, then also are the council's decrees invalid, if they recede from any other part of Scripture : so that Scripture is the rule they are to follow, and a man would have thought it had been needless to have proved it, but that we are fallen into ages in which no truth is certain, no reason concluding, nor is there any thing that can convince some men. For Stapleton* with extreme boldness against the piety of Christendom, against the public sense of the ancient church, and the practice of all pious assemblies of bishops affirms the decrees of a council to be binding, " though not confirmed by the probable testimony of Scripture."† Nay, though it be quite, " unauthorized by Scripture," *extra Scripturam* : but all wise and good men have ever said that sense which St. Hilary expressed in these words, " I will never defend what is not in the gospel." *Quæ extra evangelium sunt non defendam*. This was it which the good

* Relect. centrov. 4. q. 1. a. 3.

† Etiam si non confirmetur ne probabili testimonio Scripturarum.

good Emperor Constantine* propounded to the fathers met at Nice, “ the gospels, the divine doctrines of the Apostles, and ancient prophets obviously teach us what we ought to believe in religion.”† And this is confessed by a sober man of the Roman Church itself, the cardinal of Cusa, “ we ought to follow whatever is found in the authorized writers of sacred Scripture.”‡ Now then all the advantage I shall take from hence, is this, that if the Apostles commended them who examined their sermons by their conformity to the law and the prophets, and the men of Berea were accounted noble for searching the Scriptures whether those things which they taught were so or no; I suppose it will not be denied, but the councils’ decrees may also be tried, whether they be conform to Scripture yea or no; and although no man can take cognizance and judge the decrees of a council, “ for public authority,” *pro autoritate publica*, yet “ for private and individual information,” *pro informatione privata*, they may; the authority of a council is not greater than the authority of the Apostles, nor their dictates more sacred or authentic. Now then put the case, a council should recede from Scripture; whether or no were we bound to believe its decrees? I only ask the question: for it were hard to be bound to believe what to our understanding seems contrary to that which we know to be the Word of God: but if we may lawfully recede from the council’s decrees,

* L. 2. ad Constant.

† Libri Evangelici, oracula Apostolorum, et veterum prophetarum clarè nos instruunt quid sentiendum in divinis. Apud Theodor. l. 1. c. 7.

‡ O portet quod omnia talia quæ legere debent, contineantur in autoritatibus sacrarum scripturarum. Concord. Cathol. l. 2. c. 10,

in case they be contrariant to Scripture, it is all that I require in this question. For if they be tied to a rule, then they are to be examined and understood according to the rule, and then we are to give ourselves that Liberty of judgment which is requisite to distinguish us from beasts, and to put us into a capacity of reasonable people, following reasonable guides. But however, if it be certain that the councils are to follow Scripture, then if it be notorious that they do recede from Scripture, we are sure we must obey God rather than men, and then we are well enough. For unless we are bound to shut our eyes, and not to look upon the sun, if we may give ourselves Liberty to believe what seems most plain, and unless the authority of a council be so great a prejudice as to make us to do violence to our understanding, so as not to disbelieve the decree, because it seems contrary to Scripture, but to believe it agrees with Scripture, though we know not how, therefore because the council hath decreed it; unless I say we be bound in duty to be so obediently blind and sottish, we are sure that there are some councils which are pretended general, that have retired from the public notorious words and sense of Scripture. For what wit of man can reconcile the decree of the thirteenth session of the council of Constance with Scripture, in which session the half communion was decreed, in defiance of Scripture, and with a “notwithstanding,” *non obstante* to Christ’s institution. For in the preface of the decree, Christ’s institution and the practice of the primitive church is expressed, and then with a *non obstante*, communion in one kind is established. Now then suppose the *non obstante* in the form of words relates to the primitive practice; yet since

Christ's institution was taken notice of in the first words of the decree, and the decree made quite contrary to it, let the *non obstante* relate whither it will, the decree (not to call it a defiance) is a plain recession from the institution of Christ, and therefore the *non obstante* will refer to that without any sensible error; and indeed for all the excuses to the contrary, the decree was not so discreetly framed, but that in the very form of words, the defiance and the *non obstante* is too plainly relative to the first words. For what sense can there be in the first "permission," *licet* else? "Christ allows it in both kinds, and the Primitive Church allows it, &c. yet, notwithstanding, &c."* The first *licet* being a relative term, as well as the second *licet*, must be bounded with some correspondent. But it matters not much; let them whom it concerns enjoy the benefit of all excuses they can imagine, it is certain Christ's institution and the council's sanction are as contrary as light and darkness. Is it possible for any man to contrive a way to make the decree of the council of Trent, commanding the public offices of the church to be in Latin, friends with the fourteenth chapter of the Corinthians? It is not amiss to observe how the Hyperaspists of that council sweat to answer the allegations of St. Paul, and the wisest of them do it so extremely poor, that it proclaims to all the world that the strongest man, that is, cannot eat iron or swallow a rock. Now then, would it not be an unspeakable tyranny to all wise persons, (who as much hate to have their souls enslaved as their bodies imprisoned)

* *Licet Christus in utraque specie; licet ecclesia primitiva, &c. Tamen hoc non obstante, &c.*

to command them to believe that these decrees are agreeable to the Word of God? Upon whose understanding soever these are imposed, they may at the next session reconcile them to a crime, and make any sin sacred, or persuade him to believe propositions contradictory to a mathematical demonstration. All the arguments in the world that can be brought to prove the infallibility of councils, cannot make it so certain that they are infallible, as these two instances do prove infallibly that these were deceived; and if ever we may safely make use of our reason, and consider whether councils have erred or no, we cannot by any reason be more assured, that they have or have not, than we have in these particulars: so that either our reason is of no manner of use, in the discussion of this question, and the thing itself is not at all to be disputed, or if it be, we are certain that these actually were deceived, and we must never hope for a clearer evidence in any dispute. And if these be, others might have been, if they did as these did, that is, depart from their rule. And it was wisely said of Cusanus:* “the experience of it is notorious, that councils have erred:” and all the arguments against experience are but plain sophistry.

And therefore I make no scruple to slight the decrees of such councils, wherein the proceedings were as prejudicate and unreasonable, as in the council wherein Abailardus was condemned, where the presidents having pronounced “damnamus,” they at the lower end being awaked at the noise, heard the latter part of it, and concurred as

* Notandum est experimento rerum universale concilium posse deficere. L. 2. c. 14. Concord. Cathol.

far as “*mnamus*” went, and that was as good as *damnamus*; for if they had been awake at the pronouncing the whole word, they would have given sentence accordingly. But by this means St. Bernard* numbered the major part of voices against his adversary Abailardus: and as far as these men did do their duty, the duty of priests and judges, and wise men; so we may presume them to be assisted: but no further. But I am content this (because but a private assembly) shall pass for no instance: but what shall we say of all the Arian councils celebrated with so great fancy, and such numerous assemblies? we all say that they erred. And it will not be sufficient to say they were not lawful councils: for they were convened by that authority which all the world knows did at that time convocate councils, and by which (as it is confessed and is notorious†) the first eight generals did meet, that is by the authority of the Emperor all were called, and as many and more did come to them, than came to the most famous council of Nice: so that the councils were lawful, and if they did not proceed lawfully, and therefore did err, this is to say that councils are then not deceived, when they do their duty, when they judge impartially, when they decline interest, when they follow their rule; but this says, also that it is not infallibly certain that they will do so; for these did not, and therefore the others may be deceived as well as these were. But another thing is in the wind; for councils not confirmed by the pope, have no warrant that they shall not err, and they not being confirmed,

* *Epist. Abailardi. ad Heliss. conjugem.*

† *Cusanus, l. 2. cap. 25. Concord.*

therefore failed. But whether is the pope's confirmation after the decree or before? It cannot be supposed before; for there is nothing to be confirmed till the decree be made, and the article composed. But if it be after, then possibly the pope's decree may be requisite in solemnity of law, and to make the authority popular, public, and human, but the decree is true or false before the pope's confirmation, and is not at all altered by the supervening decree, which being "subsequent," *postnate*, to the decree, alters not what went before; "Our opinion of a fact is not to be determined by a subsequent decree." *Nunquam enim crescit ex postfacto præterit estimatio*, is the voice both of law and reason. So that it cannot make it divine, and necessary to be heartily believed. It may make it lawful, not make it true; that is, it may possibly by such means become a law but not a truth. I speak now upon supposition the popes confirmation were necessary, and required to the making of conciliary and necessary sanctions. But if it were, the case were very hard: for suppose a heresy should invade, and possess the chair of Rome, what remedy can the church have in that case, if a general council be of no authority without the pope confirm it? Will the pope confirm a council against himself? Will he condemn his own heresy? That the pope may be a heretic appears in the Canon law,* which says he may for heresy be deposed, and therefore by a council, which in this case hath plenary authority without the pope. And therefore in the synod at Rome held under pope Adrian the Second, the censure

* Dist. 40. Can. si Papa.

of the sixth synod against Honorius, who was convicted of heresy, is approved with this appendix, that in this case the case of heresy, “inferiors may judge their superiors,” *minores possint de majoribus judicare*: and therefore if a pope were above a council, yet when the question is concerning heresy, the case is altered; the pope may be judged by his inferiors, who in this case, which is the main case of all, become his superiors. And it is little better than impudence to pretend that all councils were confirmed by the pope, or that there is a necessity in respect of divine obligation, that any should be confirmed by him, more than by another of the patriarchs. For the council of Chalcedon itself, one of those four which S. Gregory did revere next to the four Evangelists, is rejected by pope Leo, who in his 53d epistle to Anatolius, and in his 54th to Martian, and in his 55th to Pulcheria, accuses it of ambition and inconsiderate temerity, and therefore no fit assembly for the habitation of the holy spirit; and Gelasius in his tome *de vinculo Anathematis*, affirms that the council is in part to be received, in part to be rejected, and compares it to heretical books of a mixt matter, and proves his assertion by the place of St. Paul, “prove all things, hold fast that which is good;” *omnia probate, quod bonum est retinete*. And Bellarmine says the same; “in the council of Chalcedon some things are good, some bad, some may be received, and some rejected; the same may be said concerning the books of heretics;” * and if any thing be false, then all is questionable and judicable and discernable, and

* In concilio Chalcedonensi quædam sunt bona, quædam mala, quædam recipienda, quædam rejicienda; ita et in libris hæreticorum. De Laicis, l. 3. c. 20. § ad hoc ult.

not infallible antecedently. And however, that council hath *ex post facto*, and by the voluntary consenting of after ages obtained great reputation; yet they that lived immediately after it, that observed all the circumstances of the thing, and the disabilities of the persons, and the uncertainty of the truth of its decrees, by reason of the uncludingness of the arguments brought to attest it, were of another mind. "As to the council of Chalcedon, it was neither openly acknowledged by the churches, nor rejected by all, for each head of a church was entirely guided by his own judgment."* And so did all men in the world that were not mastered with prejudices and undone in their understanding with accidental impertinencies; they judged upon those grounds which they had and saw, and suffered not themselves to be bound to the imperious dictates of other men, who are as uncertain in their determinations as others in their questions. And it is an evidence that there is some deception, and notable error either in the thing, or in the manner of their proceeding, when the decrees of a council shall have no authority from the compilers, nor no strength from the reasonableness of the decision, but from the accidental approbation of posterity: and if posterity had pleased, Origen had believed well, and been an orthodox person. And it was pretty sport to see that Papias was right for two ages together, and wrong ever since; and just so it was in councils, particularly in this of Chalcedon, that had a fate alterable according to the age, and

* Quod autem ad concilium Chalcedonense attinet, illud id temporis (viz. Anastasii Imp.) neque palam in Ecclesiis sanctissimis prædicatum fuit, neque ab omnibus rejectum, nam singuli ecclesiarum præsides pro suo arbitratu in ea re egerunt. Evagr. lib. 3. cap. 30.

according to the climate; which to my understanding is nothing else but an argument that the business of infallibility is a latter device, and commenced to serve such ends as cannot be justified by true and substantial grounds, and that the pope should confirm it as of necessity, is a fit cover for the same dish.

In the sixth general council, Honorious pope of Rome, was condemned; did that council stay for the Pope's confirmation before they sent forth their decree? Certainly they did not think it so needful, as that they would have suspended or cassated the decree, in case the pope had then disavowed it: for, besides the condemnation of pope Honorious for heresy, the thirteenth and fifty-fifth canons of that council are expressly against the custom of the church of Rome. But this particular is involved in that new question, whether the pope be above a council? Now since the contestation of this question, there was never any free or lawful council that determined for the pope, it is not likely any should, and is it likely that any pope will confirm a council that does not? For the council of Basil* is therefore condemned by the last Lateran, which was an assembly in the pope's own palace, and the council of Constance is of no value in this question, and slighted in a just proportion, as that article is disbelieved. But I will not much trouble the question with a long consideration of this particular; the pretence is senseless and illiterate, against reason and experience, and already determined by St. Austin† sufficiently as to this particular. "We may think

* Vid. postea de Concil. Sinnessano. § 6. N. 9.

† Epist. 162. ad Glorium.

the bishops who have given their judgment at Rome were not good judges, there still remained the larger council of the whole church in which the cause might yet be discussed by their own judges, who upon convicting these of pronouncing a wrong judgment might annul their decree.”* For since popes may be parties, may be simoniacs, schismatics, heretics, it is against reason that in their own causes, they should be judges, or that in any causes they should be superior to their judges. And as it is against reason, so is it against all experience too; for the council Sinvessanum (as it said) was convened to take cognizance of pope Marcellinus; and divers councils were held at Rome to give judgment in the causes of Damasus, Sixtus III, Symmachus, and Leo III and IV, as is to be seen in Platina, and the *Tomes* of the councils. And it is no answer to this and the like allegations to say, in matters of fact and human constitution the pope may be judged by a council, but in matters of faith all the world must stand to the pope’s determination and authoritative decision: for if the pope can by any colour pretend to any thing, it is to a supreme judicature in matters ecclesiastical, positive and of fact; and if he fails in this pretence, he will hardly hold up his head for any thing else; for the ancient bishops derived their faith from the fountain, and held that in the highest tenure, even from Christ their head; but by reason of the imperial city† it became the principal seat, and he surprized the

* *Ecce putemus illos episcopos qui Romæ judicaverunt non bonos judices fuisse, restabat adhuc plenarium ecclesiæ universæ concilium ubi etiam cum ipsis iudicibus causa possit agitari, ut si male iudicasse convicti essent, eorum sententiæ solverentur,*

† *Vide Concil. Chalced. act. 15.*

highest judicature, partly by the concession of others, partly by his own accidental advantages, and yet even in these things although he was "superior to each one," *major singulis*, yet he was "inferior to all of them together," *minor universis* :* and this is no more than what was decreed of the eighth general synod ; which if it be sense, is pertinent to this question ; for general councils are appointed to take cognizance of questions and differences about the bishop of Rome, "not however to give sentence against him audaciously," *non tamen audacter in eum ferre sententiam* : by *audacter*, as is supposed, is meant *præcipitanter*, hastily and unreasonably ; but if to give sentence against him be wholly forbidden, it is nonsense ; for to what purpose is an authority of taking cognizance, if they have no power of giving sentence, unless it were to defer it to a superior judge, which in this case cannot be supposed ? for either the pope himself is to judge his own cause after their examination of him, or the general council is to judge him : so that although the council is by that decree enjoined to proceed modestly and warily, yet they may proceed to sentence, or else the decree is ridiculous and impertinent.

But to clear all, I will instance in matters of question and opinion : for not only some councils have made their decrees without or against the pope, but some councils have had the pope's confirmation, and yet have not been the more legitimate or obligatory, but are known to be heretical. For the canons of the sixth synod, although some of them were made against the popes, and the

* Act. ult. can. 21.

custom of the church of Rome, a pope awhile after did confirm the council, and yet the canons are impious and heretical, and so esteemed by the church of Rome herself. I instance in the second canon which approves of that synod of Carthage, under Cyprian, for rebaptization of heretics, and the 72d canon that dissolves marriage between persons of differing persuasion in matters of Christian religion; and yet these canons were approved by pope Adrian I. who in his epistle to Tharasius, which is in the second action of the seventh synod, calls them “canons divinely and legally made and published,” *canones divinè et legalitèr prædicatos*. And these canons were used by pope Nicholas I. in his epistle *ad Michaelèm*, and by Innocent III. *c. à multis. extra. de ætat. ordinandorum*. So that now (that we may apply this) there are seven general councils which by the church of Rome are condemned of error. The council* of Antioch, A. D. 345, in which St. Athanasius was condemned: the council of Milaine, A. D. 354, of above 300 bishops: the council of Ariminum, consisting of 600 bishops: the second council of Ephesus, A. D. 449, in which the Eutychian heresy was confirmed, and the patriarch Flavianus killed by the faction of Dioscorus: the council of Constantinople, under Leo Isaurus, A. D. 730: and another at Constantinople 35 years after: and lastly, the council at Pisa 134 years since.† Now that these general councils are condemned, is a sufficient argument that councils may err; and it is no answer to say

* Vid. Socra. l. 2. c. 5, et Sozom. l. 3. c. 5.

† Gregor. in Rêgist. li. 3. caus. 7. ait Concilium Numidiæ errasse. Concilium Aquisgrani erravit. De raptore et raptâ dist. 20. can. de libellis. in glossâ.

they were not confirmed by the pope; for the pope's confirmation I have shewn not to be necessary, or if it were, yet even that also is an argument that general councils may become invalid, either by their own fault, or by some extrinsical supervening accident, either of which, evacuates their authority; and whether all that is required to the legitimation of a council, was actually observed in any council, is so hard to determine, that no man can be infallibly sure that such a council is authentic and sufficient probation.

And this is the second thing I shall observe, There are so many questions concerning the efficient, the form, the matter of general councils, and their manner of proceeding, and their final sanction, that after a question is determined by a conciliary assembly, there are perhaps twenty more questions to be disputed before we can with confidence, either believe the council upon its mere authority, or obtrude it upon others. And upon this ground, how easy it is to elude the pressure of an argument drawn from the authority of a general council, is very remarkable in the question about the pope's or the council's superiority; which question although it be defined for the council against the pope, by five general councils, the council of Florence, of Constance, of Basil, of Pisa, and one of the Laterans, yet the Jesuits to this day, account this question, "undetermined," *pro non definita*, and have rare pretences for their escape. As first, it is true, a council is above a pope, in case there be no pope, or he uncertain; which is Bellarmine's answer, never considering whether he spake sense or no, nor yet remembering that the council of Basil deposed

Eugenius, who was a true pope, and so acknowledged. Secondly, sometimes the pope did not confirm these councils, that is their answer: and although it was an exception that the Fathers never thought of, when they were pressed with the authority of the council of Ariminum or Syrmium, or any other Arian convention; yet the council of Basil was convened by pope Martin V. then, in its sixteenth session, declared by Eugenius the IV. to be lawfully continued, and confirmed expressly in some of its decrees by pope Nicholas, and so stood till it was at last rejected by Leo X. very many years after; but that came too late, and with too visible an interest; and this council did decree, “that a council is to be considered as superior to a pope:” *fide catholicâ tenendum concilium esse supra papam*: but if one pope confirms it, and another rejects it, as it happened in this case and in many more, does it not destroy the competency of the authority? And we see it by this instance, that it so serves the turns of men, that it is good in some cases, that is, when it makes for them, and invalid when it makes against them. Thirdly, but it is a little more ridiculous in the case of the council of Constance, whose decrees were confirmed by Martin V. but that this may be no argument against them, Belarmine tells you he only confirmed those things, “which were done with our concurrence after our diligent examination;” *quæ facta fuerant conciliariter, re diligenter examinata*; of which there being no mark, nor any certain rule to judge it, it is a device that may evacuate any thing we have a mind to, it was not done *conciliariter*, that is, not according to our mind; for *conciliariter*,

is a fine new nothing, that may signify what you please. Fourthly, but other devices yet more pretty they have; as, whether the council of Lateran, was a general council, or no, they know not, (no, nor will not know) which is a wise and plain reservation of their own advantages, to make it general, or not general, as shall serve their turns. Fifthly, as for the council of Florence, they are not sure, whether it hath defined the question “openly enough.” *satis aperte*; *aperte* they will grant, if you will allow them not *satis aperte*. Sixthly and lastly, the council of Pisa is “neither approved nor disallowed,” *neque approbatum neque reprobatum*;* which is the greatest folly of all, and most prodigious vanity. So that by something or other, either they were not convened lawfully, or they did not proceed *conciliariter*, or it is not certain that the council was general, or no; or whether the council were *approbatum* or *reprobatum*, or else it is “partly confirmed and partly disallowed;” *partim confirmatum, partim reprobatum*, or else it is *neque approbatum, neque, reprobatum*; by one of these ways, or a device like to these, all councils and all decrees shall be made to signify nothing, and to have no authority.

3. There is no general council that hath determined that a general council is infallible: no Scripture hath recorded it; no tradition universal hath transmitted to us any such proposition; so that we must receive the authority at a lower rate, and upon a less probability than the things consigned by that authority. And it is strange that the decrees of councils should be esteemed authentic and infallible, and yet it is not infallibly

* Bellar. de conc. l. 1. c. 8.

certain, that the councils themselves are infallible; because the belief of the council's infallibility is not proved to us by any medium, but such as may deceive us.

4. But the best instance that councils are some, and may all be, deceived, is the contradiction of one council to another; for in that case, both cannot be true, and which of them is true, must belong to another judgment, which is less than the solemnity of a general council; and the determination of this matter can be of no greater certainty after it is concluded, than when it was propounded as a question, being it is to be determined by the same authority, or by a less than itself. But for this allegation, we cannot want instances; the council of Trent* allows picturing of God the Father; the council of Nice altogether disallows it; the same Nicene council,† which was the seventh general, allows of picturing Christ in the form of a lamb; but the sixth synod by no means will endure it, as Caranza affirms: the council of Neocæsarea confirmed by Leo IV. dist. 20. *de libellis*,‡ and approved by the first Nicene council, as it is said in the seventh session of the council of Florence, forbids second marriages, and imposes penances on them that are married the second time, forbidding priests to be present at such marriage feasts: besides, that this is expressly against the doctrine of St Paul, it is also against the doctrine of the council of Laodicea,§ which took off such penances, and pronounced second marriages to be free and lawful. Nothing is more discrepant than the third council of Carthage

* Sess. 25.

† Act. 2.

‡ Can 82.

§ Cap. 1. L. 17. de cul. Dei. c. 20.

and the council of Laodicea, about assignation of the canon of Scripture, and yet the sixth general synod approves both: and I would fain know if all general councils are of the same mind with the Fathers of the council of Carthage, who reckon into the canon five books of Solomon. I am sure St. Austin reckoned but three, and I think all Christendom beside, are of the same opinion.* And if we look into the title of the law *De conciliis*, called *Concordantia discordantiarum*, we shall find instances enough to confirm that the decrees of some councils are contradictory to others, and that no wit can reconcile them: and whether they did or no, that they might disagree, and former councils be corrected by later, was the belief of the doctors in those ages in which the best and most famous councils were convened, as appears in that famous saying of St. Austin, speaking concerning the rebaptizing of heretics; and how much the Africans were deceived in that question. He answers the allegation of the Bishops' letters, and those national councils which confirmed St. Cyprian's opinion, by saying that they were no final determination. For "The letters of Bishops may be corrected by national councils, national councils by larger conventions, and these again by later assemblies."† Not only the occasion of the question being a matter not of fact, but of faith, as being instanced in the question of rebaptization: but also the very fabric and economy of the words, put by all the answers of those men who think themselves pressed with the

* L. 17 de cul. Dei. c. 20.

† Episcoporum literæ emendari possunt à conciliis nationalibus, concilia nationalia à plenariis, ipsaque plenaria priora à posterioribus emendari. L. 2. de bapt. Donat. c. 3.

authority of St. Austin. For as national councils may correct the bishops' letters, and general councils may correct national, so the later general may correct the former, that is, have contrary and better decrees of manners, and better determinations in matters of faith. And from hence hath risen a question whether is to be received, the former or the later councils, in case they contradict each other. The former are nearer the fountains apostolical, the later are of greater consideration; the first, have more authority, the later more reason; the first are more venerable, the later more inquisitive and seeing. And now what rule shall we have to determine our beliefs, whether to authority, or reason; the reason and the authority, both of them not being the highest in their kind, both of them being repudiable, and at most but probable? And here it is, that this great uncertainty is such, as not to determine any body, but fit to serve every body; and it is sport to see that Bellarmine * will by all means have the council of Carthage preferred before the council of Laodicea, because it is later, and yet he prefers the second Nicene† council before the council of Frankfort, because it is elder: St. Austin would have the former generals to be mended by the later; but Isidore in Gratian, says, when councils do differ *standum esse antiquioribus*,‡ the elder must carry it: and indeed these probables are buskins to serve every foot, and they are like *magnum et parvum*, they have nothing of their own, all that they have is in comparison of others; so these topics have nothing of resolute and dogmatical

* Lib. 2. de conc. c. 8. § respondeo in primis.

† Ibid. § de concilio autem.

‡ Dist. 20. can. Domino sancto.

truth, but in relation to such ends as an interested person hath a mind to serve upon them.

5. There are many councils corrupted, and many pretended and alledged, when there were no such things, both which make the topic of the authority of councils to be little and inconsiderable: there is a council brought to light in the edition of councils by Binius, viz. Sinvessanum, pretended to be kept in the year 303, but it was so private until then, that we find no mention of it in any ancient record: neither Eusebius nor Ruffinus, St. Jerome nor Socrates, Sozomen nor Theodoret, nor Eutropius, nor Bede knew any thing of it, and the eldest allegation of it is by pope Nicholas I. in the ninth century. And he that shall consider that 300 bishops in the midst of horrid persecutions (for so then they were) are pretended to have convened, will need no greater argument to suspect the imposture; besides, he that was the framer of the engine did not lay his ends together handsomely, for it is said that the deposition of Marcellinus by the synod was told to Diocletian, when he was in the Persian war, when, as it is known, before that time he had returned to Rome and triumphed for his Persian conquest, as Eusebius in his chronicle reports: and this is so plain, that Binius and Baronius pretend the text to be corrupted, and to go to mend* it by such an emendation as is a plain contradiction to the sense; and that so un-clerk-like (viz. by putting in two words and leaving out one) which whether it may be allowed them by any licence less than

* Pro cum esset in bello Persarum legi volunt cum reversus esset è bello Persarum. Euseb. Chronicon. vide Binium in notis ad Concil. Sinvessanum. Tom. 1. Concil. et Baron. Annul. Tom. 3. A. D. 303. num. 107.

poetical let critics judge. St. Gregory * saith that the Constantinopolitans had corrupted the synod of Chalcedon, and that he suspected the same concerning the Ephesine council: and in the fifth synod there was a notorious prevarication, for there were false epistles of pope Vigilius and Menna the patriarch of Constantinople inserted, and so they passed for authentic till they were discovered in the sixth general synod, actions the 12th and 14th: and not only false decrees and actions may creep into the codes of councils; but sometimes the authority of a learned man may abuse the church with pretended decrees, of which there is no copy or shadow in the code itself: and thus Thomas Aquinas † says that the epistle to the Hebrews was reckoned in the canon by the Nicene council, no shadow of which appears in those copies we now have of it; and this pretence and the reputation of the man prevailed so far with Melchior Canus, the learned bishop of Canaries, that he believed it upon this ground, “so holy a man would not have asserted such a thing if he had not been fully assured of it.” ‡ And there are many things which have prevailed upon less reason and a more slight authority. And that very council of Nice, hath not only been pretended by Aquinas, but very much abused by others, and its authority and great reputation hath made it more liable to the fraud and pretences of idle people: for whereas the Nicene Fathers made but twenty canons, for so many and no more were received by Cecilian § of Carthage, that was at Nice in

* L. 5. Ep. 14. ad Narsem.

† Comment. in Hebr.

‡ Vir sanctus rem adeo gravem non astrueret, nisi compertum habuisset.

§ Con. Carthag. VI. cap. 9.

the council; by St. Austin,* and 200 African bishops with him; by St. Cyrill† of Alexandria, by Atticus‡ of Constantinople, by Ruffinus, Isidore§ and Theodoret, as Baronius|| witnesses, yet there are fourscore lately found out in an Arabian MS. and published in Latin by Turrian and Alfonsus of Pisa; Jesuits surely, and like to be masters of the mint. And not only the canons, but the very acts of the Nicene council are false and spurious, and are so confessed by Baronius; though how he and Lindanus** will be reconciled upon the point, I neither know well nor much care. Now if one council be corrupted, we see by the instance of St. Gregory, that another may be suspected, and so all; because he found the council of Chalcedon corrupted, he suspected also the Ephesine, and another might have suspected more, for the Nicene was tampered foully with; and so three of the four generals were sullied and made suspicious, and therefore we could not be secure of any. If false acts be inserted in one council, who can trust the actions of any, unless he had the keeping the records himself, or durst swear for the register: and if a very learned man, (as Thomas Aquinas was) did either wilfully deceive us, or was himself ignorantly abused in allegation of a canon which was not, it is but a very fallible topic at the best, and the most holy

* Con. African.

† Ibid. c. 102. et c. 133.

‡ Lib. 1. Eccl. Hist. c. 6.

§ Imprinc. Con. de Synod. Princ.

|| Baronius, tom. 3. A. D. 325. n. 156. Tom. 3. ad A. D. 325. n. 62. 63.

** Panopl. l. 2. c. 6.

man that is may be abused himself, and the wisest may deceive others.

6. And lastly, to all this and to the former instances, by way of corollary, I add some more particulars in which it is notorious that councils general, and national, that is, such as were either general by original, or by adoption into the canon of the Catholic Church did err, and were actually deceived. The first council of Toledo admits to the communion him that hath a concubine, so he have no wife besides, and this council is approved by pope Leo in the 92d epistle to Rusticus, bishop of Narbona. Gratian* says, that the council means by a concubine, a wife married *sine dote et solemnitate*; but this is daubing with untempered mortar. For though it was a custom amongst the Jews to distinguish wives from their concubines, by dowry and legal solemnities, yet the Christian distinguished them no otherwise, than as lawful and unlawful, than as chastity and fornication: and besides, if by a concubine is meant a lawful wife without a dowry, to what purpose should the council make a law that such a one might be admitted to the communion? For I suppose it was never thought to be a law of Christianity, that a man should have a portion with his wife, nor he that married a poor virgin should deserve to be excommunicate. So that Gratian and his followers are pressed so with this canon, that to avoid the impiety of it, they expound it to a signification without sense or purpose. But the business then was, that adultery was so public and notorious a practice, that the council did chuse rather to

* Dist. 34. can. omnibus.

endure simple fornication, that by such permission of a less, they might slacken the public custom of a greater, just as at Rome they permit stews to prevent unnatural sins; but that by a public sanction, fornicators, habitually and notoriously such, should be admitted to the holy communion was an act of priests, so unfit for priests, that no excuse can make it white or clean. The council of Wormes* does authorize a superstitious custom at that time too much used, of discovering stolen goods by the Holy Sacrament, which Aquinas† justly condemns for superstition. The sixth‡ synod separates persons lawfully married upon an accusation and crime of heresy: the Roman council under pope Nicholas II.§ defined that not only the Sacrament of Christ's body, but the very body itself of our blessed Saviour is handled and broken by the hands of the priest, and chewed by the teeth of the communicants; which is a manifest error, derogatory from the truth of Christ's beatifical resurrection, and glorification in the heavens, and disavowed by the church of Rome itself: but Bellarmine|| that answers all the arguments in the world, whether it be possible or not possible, would fain make the matter fair, and the decree tolerable; for says he, the decree means that the body is broken not in itself but in the sign, and yet the decree says that not only the Sacrament, (which if any thing be, is certainly the sign) but the very body itself is broken and champed with hands and teeth respectively; which indeed was nothing but a plain over-acting the article in contradiction to Berengarius. And

* Cap. 3. † Part 3. q. 80. a. 6. ad 3 m. ‡ Can. 72.

§ Can. ego Berengar. de consecrat. dist. 2.

|| Lib. 2. c. 8. de Concil.

the answer of Bellarmine is not sense; for he denies that the body itself is broken in itself (that was the error we charged upon the Roman synod) and the sign abstracting from the body is not broken (for that was the opinion that council condemned in Berengarius) but says Bellarmine, the body in the sign: what is that? for neither the sign, nor the body, nor both together are broken: for if either of them distinctly, they either rush upon the error which the Roman synod condemned in Berengarius, or upon that which they would fain excuse in pope Nicholas; but if both are broken, then it is true to affirm it of either, and then the council is blasphemous in saying that Christ's glorified body is passible and frangible by natural manducation: so that it is and it is not, it is not this way, and yet it is no way else, but it is some way, and they know not how, and the council spoke blasphemy, but it must be made innocent; and therefore, it was requisite a cloud of a distinction should be raised, that the unwary reader might be amused, and the decree escape untouched; but the truth is, they that undertake to justify all that other men say, must be more subtle than they that said it, and must use such distinctions which possibly the first authors did not understand. But I will multiply no more instances, for what instance soever I shall bring, some or other will be answering it, which thing is so far from satisfying me in the particulars, that it increases the difficulty in the general, and satisfies me in my first belief: for* if no

* Illa demùm eis videntur edicta et concilia quæ in rem suam faciunt; reliqua non pluris æstimant quam conventum muliercularum in textrinâ vel thermis. Ludo. Vives. in Scholiis, lib. 20. Aug. de Civit. Dei. c. 26.

decrees of councils can make against them, though they seem never so plain against them, then let others be allowed the same liberty, (and there is all the reason in the world they should) and no decree shall conclude against any doctrine that they have already entertained; and by this means the church is no fitter instrument to decree controversies than the Scripture itself, there being as much obscurity and disputing in the sense, and the manner, and the degree, and the competency, and the obligation of the decree of a council, as of a place of Scripture. And what are we the nearer for a decree, if any sophister shall think his elusion enough to contest against the authority of a council? Yet this they do, that pretend highest for their authority, which consideration, or some like it, might possibly make Gratian prefer St. Jerome's* single testimony before a whole council, because he had Scripture of his side; which says, that the authority of councils is not "deserving of credit and confidence on their own account," *αὐτόπιστος*, and that councils may possibly recede from their rule, from Scripture; and in that case, a single person proceeding according to rule is a better argument; which indeed was the saying of Panormitan; "In matters of faith, the opinion of an individual is preferable to the dictate of a pope or of a whole council, if he be guided in his decision by better arguments."†

I end this discourse with representing the

* 36. q. 2. c. placuit.

† In concernentibus fidem etiam dictum unius privati esset dicto papæ aut totius concilii præferendum, si ille moveretur melioribus argumentis. Part. 1. de election, Et elect. potest. cap. signifiasti,

words of Gregory Nazienzen in his epistle to Procopius ; “ To say the truth, such is my feeling that I would shun all the councils of bishops, for I have never known one of them come to any good and prosperous issue, or which did not rather tend to the increase than the diminution of wickedness.”* But I will not be so severe and dogmatical against them ; for I believe many councils to have been called with sufficient authority, to have been managed with singular piety and prudence, and to have been finished with admirable success and truth. And where we find such councils, he that will not, with all veneration, believe their decrees, and receive their sanctions, understands not that great duty he owes to them who have the care of our souls, whose *faith we are bound to follow*, (saith St. Paul†) that is, so long as they follow Christ, and certainly many councils have done so : but this was then when the public interest of Chistendom was better conserved in determining a true article, than in finding a discreet temper, or a wise expedient to satisfy disagreeing persons ; (as the fathers at Trent did, and the Lutherans and Calvinists did at Sendomir in Polonia ; and the Sublapsarians and Supralapsarians did at Dordt.) It was in ages when the sum of religion did not consist in maintaining the *grandezza* of the papacy ; where there was no order of men with a fourth vow upon

* Ego si vera scribere oportet ita animo affectus sum, ut omnia Episcoporum concilia fugiam, quoniam nullius concilii finem lætum faustumque vidi, nec quod depulsionem mælorum potius quam accessionem et incrementum habuerit. Athanas, lib. de synod. Frustra. igitur circumcursantes prætexunt obfidem se synodos postulare, cum sit divina Scriptura omnibus potentior.

† Heb. 13. 7.

them, to advance St. Peter's Chair ; when there was no man, nor any company of men, that esteemed themselves infallible, and therefore they searched for truth as if they meant to find it, and would believe it if they could see it proved, not resolved to prove it because they had upon chance or interest believed it ; then they had rather have spoken a truth, than upheld their reputation, but only in order to truth. This was done sometimes, and when it was done, God's Spirit never failed them, but gave them such assistances as were sufficient to that good end for which they were assembled, and did implore his aid : and therefore it is, that the four general councils so called by way of eminency, have gained so great a reputation above all others, not because they had a better promise, or more special assistances, but because they proceeded better according to the rule, with less faction, without ambition and temporal ends.

And yet those very assemblies of bishops had no authority by their decrees to make a divine faith, or to constitute new objects of necessary credence ; they made nothing true that was not so before, and therefore they are to be apprehended in the nature of excellent guides, and whose decrees are most certainly to determine all those who have no argument to the contrary of greater force and efficacy than the authority or reasons of the council. And there is a duty owing to every parish priest, and to every diocesan bishop ; these are appointed over us, and to answer for our souls, and are therefore morally to guide us, as reasonable creatures are to be guided, that is, by reason and discourse : for in things of judgment and understanding, they are but in form next above beasts,

that are to be ruled by the imperiousness and absoluteness of authority, unless the authority be divine, that is, infallible. Now then, in a juster height, but still in its true proportion, assemblies of bishops are to guide us with a higher authority, because in reason it is supposed they will do it better, with more argument and certainty, and with decrees, which have the advantage by being the results of many discourses of very wise and good men: but that the authority of general councils, was never esteemed absolute, infallible and unlimited, appears in this, that before they were obliging, it was necessary that each particular church respectively should accept them, *concurrente universali totius ecclesia consensu, &c. in declaratione veritatum quæ credendæ sunt. &c.** That is the way of making the decrees of councils become authentic, and be turned into a law as Gerson observes; and till they did, their decrees were but a dead letter, (and therefore it is, that these later popes have so laboured, that the council of Trent should be received in France; and Carolus Molineus, a great lawyer, and of the Roman communion, disputed † against the reception,) and this is a known condition in the canon law, but it proves plainly, that the decrees of councils have their authority from the voluntary submission of the particular churches, not from the prime sanction and constitution of the council. And there is great reason it should; for as the representative body of the church derives all power from the diffusive body which is represented, so it resolves

* Vid. St. August. l. l. c. 18. de bapt. contr. Donat.

† So did the third estate of *France* in the convention of the three estates under *Lewis* the 13th earnestly contend against it.

into it, and though it may have all the legal power, yet it hath not all the natural; for more able men may be unsent, then sent; and they who are sent may be wrought upon by stratagem, which cannot happen to the whole diffusive church; it is therefore most fit that since the legal power, that is, the external was passed over to the body representative, yet the efficacy of it, and the internal, should so still remain in the diffusive as to have power to consider whether their representatives did their duty, yea or no, and so to proceed accordingly: for unless it be in matters of justice, in which the interest of a third person is concerned, no man will or can be supposed to pass away all power from himself of doing himself right, in matters personal, proper, and of so high concernment: it is most unnatural and unreasonable. But besides, that they are excellent instruments of peace, the best human judicatories in the world, rare sermons for the determining a point in controversy, and the greatest probability from human authority, besides these advantages, (I say) I know nothing greater that general councils can pretend to, with reason and argument sufficient to satisfy any wise man: and as there was never any council so general, but it might have been more general; for in respect of the whole church, even Nice itself was but a small assembly; so there is no decree so well constituted, but it may be proved by an argument higher than the authority of the council: and therefore general councils, and national, and provincial, and diocesan in their several degrees, are excellent guides for the prophets, and directions and instructions for their Prophesyings, but not of weight and authority to restrain their Liberty so wholly, but

that they may dissent when they see a reason strong enough so to persuade them, as to be willing upon the confidence of that reason and their own sincerity, to answer to God for such their modesty, and peaceable, but (as they believe) their necessary disagreeing.

SECTION VII.

Of the fallibility of the Pope, and the uncertainty of his expounding Scripture, and resolving questions.

BUT since the question between the council and the pope grew high, there have not wanted abettors so confident on the pope's behalf, as to believe general councils to be nothing but pomps and solemnities of the catholic church, and that all the authority of determining controversies is formally and effectually in the pope. And therefore to appeal from the pope to a future council is a heresy, yea, and treason too, said pope Pius II,* and therefore it concerns us now to be wise and wary. But before I proceed, I must needs remember that pope Pius II,† while he was the wise and learned Æneas Sylvius, was very confident for the pre-eminence of a council, and gave a merry reason why more clerks were for the popes than the council, though the truth was

* Epist. ad Norimberg.

† Patrum et avorum nostrorum tempore pauci audebant dicere papam esse supra concilium. l. l. de gestis concil. Basil.

on the other side, even because the pope gives bishoprics and abbeyes, but councils give none; and yet, as soon as he was made pope, as if he had been inspired, his eyes were open to see the great privileges of St. Peter's chair, which before he could not see, being amused with the truth, or else with the reputation of a general council. But however, there are many that hope to make it good, that the pope is the universal and the infallible doctor, that he breathes decrees as oracles, that to dissent from any of his cathedral determinations, is absolute heresy, the rule of faith being nothing else but conformity to the chair of Peter. So that here we have met a restraint of Prophecy indeed; but yet to make amends, I hope we shall have an infallible guide; and when a man is in heaven, he will never complain that his choice is taken from him, and that he is confined to love and to admire, since his love and his admiration is fixed upon that which makes him happy, even upon God himself. And in the church of Rome there is in a lower degree, but in a true proportion, as little cause to be troubled, that we are confined to believe just so, and no choice left us for our understandings to discover, or our wills to chuse, because though we be limited, yet we are pointed out where we ought to rest, we are confined to our center, and there where our understandings will be satisfied, and therefore will be quiet, and where after all our strivings, studies and endeavours, we desire to come, that is, to truth, for there we are secured to find it, because we have a guide that is infallible: if this prove true, we are well enough. But if it be false or uncertain, it were better we had still kept our

Liberty, than be cozened out of it with gay pretences. This then, we must consider.

And here we shall be oppressed with a cloud of witnesses: for what more plain than the commission given to Peter? "*Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church. And to thee will I give the keys.*" And again, "*For thee have I prayed that thy faith fail not; but thou, when thou art converted, confirm thy brethren.*" And again, "*If thou lovest me, feed my sheep:*" now nothing of this being spoken to any of the other Apostles; by one of these places, St. Peter must needs be appointed foundation or head of the church, and by consequence he is to rule and govern all. By some other of these places he is made the supreme pastor, and he is to teach and determine all, and enabled with an infallible power so to do: and in a right understanding of these authorities, the fathers speak great things of the chair of Peter; for we are as much bound to believe that all this was spoken to Peter's successors, as to his person; that must by all means be supposed, and so did the old doctors, who had as much certainty of it as we have, and no more; but yet let us hear what they have said. "To this church, by reason of its more powerful principality, it is necessary all churches round about should convene: *.....In this, tradition Apostolical, always was observed, and therefore to communicate with this bishop, with this church, was to be in communion with the church Catholic: †.....To this church, error or perfidiousness cannot have access: ‡.....Against

* Irenæ. contra. hæres. l. 3. c. 3.

† Ambr. de obitu Salyri, et l. 1. Ep. 4. ad Imp. Cypr. Ep. 52.

‡ Cypr. Ep. 55. ad Cornel.

this see, the gates of hell cannot prevail:*.....For we know this church to be built upon a rock :And whoever eats the Lamb not within this house, is prophane ; he that is not in the ark of Noah, perishes in the inundation of waters. He that gathers not with this bishop, he scatters; and he that belongeth not to Christ, must needs belong to Antichrist.”† And that is his final sentence : but if you would have all this proved by an infallible argument, Optatus,‡ of Milevis in Africa, supplies it to us from the very name of Peter : for therefore Christ gave him the cognomination of Cephas, “ from the head,” ἀπὸ τῆς κεφαλῆς, to shew that St. Peter was the visible head of the Catholic church. “ A cover this, truly worthy of the dish,” as we say ; *dignum patellæ operculum* ! This long harrangue must needs be full of tragedy to all them that take liberty to themselves to follow Scripture and their best guides, if it happens in that liberty that they depart from the persuasions or the communion of Rome : but indeed, if with the peace of the bishops of Rome, I may say it, this scene is the most unhandsomely laid, and the worst carried, of any of those pretences that have lately abused Christendom.

1. Against the allegations of Scripture, I shall lay no greater prejudice than this, that if a person disinterested should see them, and consider what the products of them might possibly be, the last thing that he would think of, would be, how that any of these places should serve the ends or pretences of the church of Rome : for to instance in one of the particulars ; that man had need have a

* St. Austin. in Psal. contra. partem. Donat.

† Hieron. Ep. 57. ad Damasum.

‡ L. 2. contra. Parmenian.

strong fancy—who imagines, that because Christ prayed for St. Peter, that (being he had designed him to be one of those upon whose preaching and doctrine he did mean to constitute a church) *that his faith might not fail*, (for it was necessary that no bitterness or stopping should be in one of the first springs, least the current be either spoiled or obstructed) that therefore, the faith of pope Alexander VI. or Gregory, or Clement, 1,500 years after, should be preserved by virtue of that prayer, which the form of words, the time, the occasion, the manner of the address, the effect itself, and all the circumstances of the action and person, did determine to be personal: and when it was more than personal,* St. Peter did not represent his successors at Rome, but the whole Catholic church, says Aquinas and the divines of the University of Paris.† “They would be prayed to for the church alone,” *volunt enim pro solâ ecclesia esse oratum*, says Bellarmine of them, and the gloss upon the canon law, plainly denies the effect of this prayer at all to appertain to the pope. “The question is, respecting what church it is said, that it is infallible: is it of the pope himself, who is called the church? But it is certain the pope may err—I answer, the congregation of the faithful is called the church, and it cannot be otherwise than such, for our Lord himself prays for the church, and will not be disappointed of the request of his lips.”‡ But there is a little

* 22æ. q. 2. a. 6. ar. 6. ad 3 m.

† L. 4. de Roman. Pont. c. 3. § 1.

‡ Quare de quâ ecclesia intelligas quod hoc dicitur quod non possit errare, si de ipso papâ qui ecclesia dicitur? sed certum est quod papa errare potest.... Respondeo ipsa congregatio fidelium hic dicitur ecclesia, et talis ecclesia non potest non esse, nam ipse

danger in this argument when we well consider it ; but it is likely to redound on the head of them whose turns it should serve : for it may be remembered that for all this prayer of Christ for St. Peter, the good man fell foully, and denied his master shamefully : and shall Christ's prayer be of greater efficacy for his successors, for whom it was made but indirectly, and by consequence, than for himself, for whom it was directly and in the first intention ? And if not, then for all this argument, the popes may deny Christ as well as their chief and decessor Peter. But it would not be forgotten how the Roman doctors will by no means allow that St. Peter was then the chief bishop or pope, when he denied his master. But then much less was he chosen chief bishop, when the prayer was made for him, because the prayer was made before his fall ; that is, before that time in which it is confessed, he was not as yet made pope : and how then the whole succession of the papacy should be entitled to it, passes the length of my hand to span. But then also if it be supposed and allowed, that these words shall intail infallibility upon the chair of Rome, why shall not also all the apostolical sees be infallible as well as Rome ? Why shall not Constantinople or Byzantium, where St. Andrew sate ? Why shall not Ephesus, where St. John sate ? Or Jerusalem, where St. James sate ? For Christ prayed for them all, “ that the Father would sanctify them by his truth ;” *Ut Pater sanctificaret eos sua veritate*, John 17.

Dominus orat pro ecclesiâ, et voluntate labiorum suorum non fraudabitur. Caus. 21. cap. à recta. q. 1. 29. dist. Anastatius, 60. dist. fi. papa.

2. For “ I will give thee the keys,” *tibi dabo claves*: was it personal or not? If it were, then the bishops of Rome have nothing to do with it: if it were not, then by what argument will it be made evident, that St. Peter, in the promise represented only his successors, and not the whole college of Apostles, and the whole hierarchy? For if St. Peter was chief of the Apostles, and head of the church, he might fair enough be the representative of the whole college, and receive it in their right as well as his own; which also is certain that it was so, for the same promise of binding and loosing, (which certainly was all that the keys were given for,) was made afterward to all the Apostles, Mat. xviii. and the power of remitting and retaining, which in reason and according to the style of the church, is the same thing in other words, was actually given to all the Apostles; and unless that was the performing the first and second promise, we find it not recorded in Scripture how, or when, or whether yet or no, the promise be performed: that promise I say, which did not pertain to Peter principally and by origination, and to the rest, by communication, society and adherence, but that promise which was made to St. Peter first, but not for himself, but for all the college, and for all their successors, and then made the second time to them all, without representation, but in diffusion, and performed to all alike in presence, except St. Thomas. And if he went to St. Peter to derive it from him, I know not; I find no record for that, but that Christ conveyed the promise to him by the same commission, the church yet never doubted, nor had she any reason, But this matter is too notorious: I say no more to it, but repeat the words and argument of St. Austin,

“If the keys were only given and so promised to St. Peter, that the church had not the keys, (*si hoc Petro tantum dictum est, non facit hoc ecclesia: **) then the church can neither bind nor loose, remit nor retain, which God forbid;” if any man should endeavour to answer this argument, I leave him and St. Austin to contest it.

3. For “feed my sheep,” *pasce oves*, there is little in that allegation, besides the boldness of the objectors; for were not all the Apostles bound to feed Christ’s sheep? had they not all the commission from Christ, and Christ’s Spirit immediately? St. Paul had certainly; did not St. Peter himself, say to all the bishops of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithinia, that they should feed the flock of God, and the great bishop and shepherd should give them an immarcescible crown; plainly implying, that from whence they derived their authority, from him they were sure of a reward: in pursuance of which, St Cyprian laid his argument upon this basis, “in words implying that the commission was to all, and that a portion of the flock was allotted to every pastor.”† Did not St. Paul, call to the bishops of Ephesus, to feed the flock of God, of which the Holy Ghost hath made them bishops or overseers? And that this very commission was spoken to Peter, not in a personal, but a public capacity, and in him spoke to all the Apostles we see attested by St. Austin and St. Ambrose,‡ and generally by all antiquity; and it so concerned even every priest, that Damasus was willing

* Tra. 50. in Ioann.

† Nam cum statutum sit omnibus nobis, &c. et singulis pastoribus portio gregis, &c. L. 1. Epist. 3.

‡ De agone Christi. c. 30.

enough to have St. Jerome explicate many questions for him. And Liberius writes an epistle to Athanasius, with much modesty, requiring his advice in a question of faith, "That I also may be persuaded without all doubting of those things which you shall be pleased to command me".* Now Liberius needed not to have troubled himself to have written into the East to Athanasius; for if he had but seated himself in his chair, and made the dictate, the result of his pen and ink would certainly have taught him and all the church; but that the good pope was ignorant that either *pasce oves* was his own charter, and prerogative, or that any other words of Scripture had made him to be infallible, or if he was not ignorant of it, he did very ill to compliment himself out of it. So did all those bishops of Rome, that in that troublesome and unprofitable question of Easter, being unsatisfied in the supputation of the Egyptians, and the definitions of the mathematical bishops of Alexandria, did yet require and intreat St. Ambrose † to tell them his opinion, as he himself witnesses; if *pasce oves* belongs only to the pope by primary title, in these cases the sheep came to feed the shepherd, which, though it was well enough in the thing, is very ill for the pretensions of the Roman bishops; and if we consider how little many of the popes have done toward feeding the sheep of Christ, we shall hardly determine which is the greater prevarication, that the pope should claim the whole commission to be granted to him, or that the execution of the commission should be wholly passed over to others; and it may be there

* ἵνα κατὰ πεποιθὼς ὃ ἀδιακρίτως, περι ὧν ἀξιοῖς κελεύειν μοι.
Epist ad Athanas. apud Athanas. tom. 1. pag. 42. Paris.

† L. 10. Epist. 83.

is a mystery in it, that since St. Peter sent a bishop with his staff to raise up a disciple of his from the dead, who was afterward bishop of Triers, the pope of Rome never wears a pastoral staff, except it be in that diocese, (says Aquinas*) for great reason, that he who does not do the office, should not bear the symbol; but a man would think that the pope's master of the ceremonies, was ill-advised not to assign a pastoral staff to him, who pretends the commission of *pasce oves* to belong to him by prime right and origination. But this is not a business to be merry in.

But the great support is expected from "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, &c."† Now there being so great difference in the exposition of these words, by persons disinterested, who, if any, might be allowed to judge in this question, it is certain that neither one sense nor other can be obtruded for an article of faith, much less as a Catholicon instead of all, by constituting an authority which should guide us in all faith, and determine us in all questions; for if the church was not built upon the person of Peter, then his successors can challenge nothing from this instance; now that it was the confession of Peter, upon which the church was to rely for ever, we have witnesses very credible, St. Ignatius,† St. Basil, § St. Hilary, || St. Gregory Nyssen,** St. Gregory the Great, †† St. Austin, †† St. Cyrill of Alexandria, §§ Isidore

* M. 4. Sent. dist. 24.

† Tu es Petrus et super hanc petram ædificabo ecclesiam, &c.

‡ Ad Philadelph. § Seleuc. orat. 25. || L. 6. de Trinit.

** De Trinitate advers. Judæos.

†† L. 3. Ep. 33.

‡‡ In l. Eph. Joann. tr. 10.

§§ De Trinit. l. 4.

Pelusiot,* and very many more. And although all these witnesses concurring cannot make a proposition to be true, yet they are sufficient witnesses, that it was not the universal belief of Christendom that the church was built upon St. Peter's person. Cardinal Perron hath a fine fancy to elude this variety of exposition, and the consequence of it; for (saith he) these expositions are not contrary or exclusive of each other, but inclusive and consequent to each other: for the church is founded causally upon the confession of St. Peter, formally upon the ministry of his person, and this was a reward or a consequence of the former: so that these expositions are both true, but they are conjoined as mediate and immediate, direct and collateral, literal and moral, original and perpetual, accessory and temporal; the one consigned at the beginning, the other introduced upon occasion; for before the spring of the Arian heresy, the fathers expounded these words of the person of Peter; but after the Arians troubled them, the fathers finding great authority, and energy in this confession of Peter for the establishment of the natural filiation of the Son of God, to advance the reputation of these words and the force of the argument, gave themselves licence to expound these words to the present advantage, and to make the confession of Peter to be the foundation of the church; that if the Arians should encounter this authority, they might with more prejudice to their persons declaim against their cause, by saying they overthrew the foundation of the church. Besides that this answer does much dishonour the reputation of the

fathers' integrity, and makes their interpretations less credible, as being made not of knowledge or reason, but of necessity, and to serve a present turn, it is also false: for Ignatius* expounds it in a spiritual sense, which also the liturgy attributed to, St. James' calls, "upon the rock of faith," ἐπὶ πέτρᾳ τῆς πίστεως:* and Origen expounds it mystically to a third purpose, but exclusively to this: and all these were before the Arian controversy. But if it be lawful to make such unproved observations, it would have been to better purpose, and more reason to have observed it thus: the fathers, so long as the bishop of Rome kept himself to the limits prescribed him by Christ, and indulged to him by the constitution or concession of the church, were unwary and apt to expound this place of the person of Peter; but when the church began to enlarge her phylacteries by the favor of princes, and the sunshine of a prosperous fortune, and the pope, by the advantage of the imperial seat, and other accidents began to invade upon the other bishops and patriarchs, then that he might have no colour from Scripture for such new pretensions, they did most generally turn the stream of their expositions from the person to the confession of Peter, and declared that to be the foundation of the church. And thus I have requited fancy with fancy; but for the main point, that these two expositions are inclusive of each other, I find no warrant; for though they may consist together well enough, if Christ had so intended them; yet unless it could be shown by some circumstance of the text, or some other extrinsical argument that they must be so, and that

* Epist. ad Philadelph. In c. 16 Mat. tract. 1.

both senses were actually intended, it is but *gratis dictum*, and a begging of the question, to say that they are so ; and the fancy so new, that when St. Austin had expounded this place of the person of Peter, he reviews it again, and in his retractations leaves every man to his liberty, which to take ; as having nothing certain in this article : which had been altogether needless if he had believed them to be inclusively in each other, neither of them had need to have been retracted, both were alike true, both of them might have been believed : but I said the fancy was new, and I had reason ; for it was so unknown till yesterday, that even the late writers of his own side, expound the words of the confession of St. Peter exclusively to his person or any thing else, as is to be seen in Marsilius,* Petrus de Aliaco,† and the gloss upon *Dist. 19. can. ita Dominus*, § *ut supra*, which also was the interpretation of Phavorinus Camers their own bishop, from whom they learned the resemblance of the word “ petros” (πέτρος) and “ petra,” (πέτρα,) of which they have made so many gay discourses.

5. But upon condition I may have leave at another time to recede from so great and numerous testimony of fathers, I am willing to believe that it was not the confession of St. Peter, but his person upon which Christ said he would build his church, or that these expositions are consistent with and consequent to each other, that this confession was the objective foundation of faith, and Christ and his Apostles the subjective, Christ principally, and St. Peter instrumentally ; and yet I understand not any advantage will hence

* Desens. pacis, part 2. c. 28. † Recommend. sacr. Script.

accrue to the see of Rome : for upon St. Peter it was built, but not alone, for it *was upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone*; and when St. Paul reckoned the œconomy of hierarchy, he reckons not Peter first, and then the Apostles. But first Apostles, secondarily Prophets, &c. And whatsoever is first, either is before all things else, or at least nothing is before it : so that at least St. Peter is not before all the rest of the Apostles, which also St. Paul expressly avers, *I am in nothing inferior to the very chiefest of the Apostles*, no not in the very being a rock and a foundation ; and it was of the church of Ephesus, that St. Paul said in particular it was “ the pillar and ground (or foundation) of truth ;” *columna et firmamentum veritatis*, that church was, not excluding others, for they also were as much as she ; for so we keep close and be united to the corner-stone, although some be master builders, yet all may build, and we have known whole nations converted by laymen and women, who have been builders so far as to bring them to the corner-stone.*

6. But suppose all these things concern St. Peter in all the capacities that can be with any colour pretended, yet what have the bishops of Rome to do with this ? For how will it appear that these promises and commissions did relate to him as a particular bishop, and not as a public Apostle ? Since this latter is so much the more likely, because the great pretence of all seems in reason more proportionable to the founding of a church, than its continuance : and yet if they did relate

* Vid. Socrat. l. 1. c. 19. 20. Sozom. l. 2. c. 14. Niceph. l. 14. c. 40.

to him as a particular bishop, (which yet is a further degree of improbability, removed further from certainty) yet why shall St. Clement or Linus rather succeed in this great office of headship than St. John or any of the Apostles that survived Peter? It is no way likely a private person should skip over the head of an Apostle; or why shall his successors at Rome more enjoy the benefit of it than his successors at Antioch, since that he was at Antioch and preached there, we have a divine authority, but that he did so at Rome at most we have but a human; and if it be replied, that because he died at Rome, it was argument enough that there his successors were to inherit his privilege, this besides that at most it is but one little degree of probability, and so not of strength sufficient to support an article of faith; it makes that the great divine right of Rome, and the apostolical presidency was so contingent and fallible as to depend upon the decree of Nero; and if he had sent him to Antioch there to have suffered martyrdom, the bishops of that town had been heads of the Catholic Church. And this thing presses the harder, because it is held by no mean persons in the church of Rome, that the bishopric of Rome and the papacy are things separable: and the pope may quit that see and sit in another, which to my understanding is an argument, that he that succeeded Peter at Antioch, is as much supreme by divine right as he that sits at Rome;* both alike, that is, neither by divine ordinance: for if the Roman bishops by Christ's intention were to be head of the church, then by the same intention, the succession must be continued in that

* Vid. Cameracens. Qu. vespert.

see, and then let the pope go whether he will, the bishop of Rome must be the head, which they themselves deny, and the pope himself did not believe, when in a schism he sate at Avignon; and that it was to be continued in the see of Rome, it is but offered to us upon conjecture, upon an act of providence, as they fancy it, so ordering it by vision, and this proved by an author which themselves call fabulous and apocryphal, under the name of Linus, in *Biblioth. PP. de passione Petri et Pauli*: a goodly building which relies upon an event that was accidental, whose purpose was but insinuated, the meaning of it but conjectured at, and this conjecture so uncertain, that it was an imperfect aim at the purpose of an event, which whether it was true or no, was so uncertain, that it is ten to one there was no such matter. And yet again, another degree of uncertainty is, to whom the bishops of Rome do succeed: for St. Paul was as much bishop of Rome, as St. Peter was; there he presided, there he preached, and he it was that was the doctor of the uncircumcision and of the Gentiles, St. Peter of the circumcision, and of the Jews only; and therefore the converted Jews at Rome, might with better reason claim the privilege of St. Peter, than the Romans and the churches in her communion, who do not derive from Jewish parents.

7. If the words were never so appropriate to Peter, or also communicated to his successors, yet of what value will the consequent be? what prerogative is entailed upon the chair of Rome? For that St. Peter was the ministerial head of the church, is the most that is desired to be proved by those and all other words brought for the same purposes, and interests of that see: now let the

ministerial head have what dignity can be imagined, let him be the first (and in all communities that are regular and orderly, there must be something that is first, upon certain occasions where an equal power cannot be exercised, and made pompous or ceremonial :) but will this ministerial headship infer an infallibility ? will it infer more than the headship of the Jewish synagogue, where clearly the high priest was supreme in many senses, yet in no sense infallible ? will it infer more to us, than it did amongst the Apostles ? amongst whom if for order's sake, St. Peter was the first, yet he had no compulsory power over the Apostles ; there was no such thing spoken of, nor any such thing put in practice. And that the other Apostles were by a personal privilege as infallible as himself, is no reason to hinder the exercise of jurisdiction or any compulsory power over them ; for though in faith they were infallible, yet in manners and matter of fact as likely to err as St. Peter himself was, and certainly there might have something happened in the whole college, that might have been a record of his authority, by transmitting an example of the exercise of some judicial power over some one of them : if he had but withstood any of them to their faces as St. Paul did him, it had been more than yet is said in his behalf. Will the ministerial headship infer any more than when the church in a community or a public capacity, should do any act of ministry ecclesiastical, he shall be first in order ? Suppose this to be a dignity to preside in councils, which yet was not always granted him ; suppose it to be a power of taking cognizance of the major causes of bishops when councils cannot be called ; suppose it a double voice or the last decisive, or the nega-

tive in the causes exterior ; suppose it to be what you will of dignity or external regimen, which when all churches were united in communion, and neither the interest of states, nor the engagement of opinions had made disunion, might better have been acted than now it can ; yet this will fall infinitely short of a power to determine controversies infallibly, and to prescribe to all men's faith and consciences. A ministerial headship or the prime minister, cannot in any capacity become the foundation of the church to any such purpose. And therefore men are causelessly amused with such premises, and are afraid of such conclusions, which will never follow from the admission of any sense of these words that can with any probability be pretended.

8. I consider that these arguments from Scripture, are too weak to support such an authority which pretends to give oracles, and to answer infallibly in questions of faith, because there is greater reason to believe the popes of Rome have erred, and greater certainty of demonstration, than there can be that these places are infallible, as will appear by the instances and perpetual experiment of their being deceived, of which there is no question, but of the sense of these places there is : and indeed, if I had as clear Scripture for their infallibility, as I have against their half communion, against their service in an unknown tongue, worshipping of images, and divers other articles, I would make no scruple of believing, but limit and conform my understanding to all their dictates, and believe it reasonable all Propheying should be restrained : but till then, I have leave to discourse, and to use my reason ; and to my reason, it seems not likely that neither

Christ nor any of his Apostles, St. Peter himself, nor St. Paul writing to the church of Rome, should speak the least word or tittle of the infallibility of their bishops, for it was certainly as convenient to tell us of a remedy, as to foretell that certainly there must needs be heresies, and need of a remedy. And it had been a certain determination of the question, if when so rare an opportunity was ministered in the question about circumcision that they should have sent to Peter, who for his infallibility in ordinary, and his power of headship would not only with reason enough as being infallibly assisted, but also for his authority have best determined the question, if at least the first Christians had known so profitable and so excellent a secret; and although we have but little record, that the first council at Jerusalem did much observe the solemnities of law, and the forms of conciliary proceedings, and the ceremonials; yet so much of it as is recorded, is against them; St. James and not St. Peter gave the final sentence, and although St. Peter determined the question "for liberty," *pro libertate*, yet St. James made the decree, and the assumendum too, and gave sentence they should abstain from some things there mentioned, which by way of temper he judged most expedient: and so it passed. And St. Peter shewed no sign of a superior authority, nothing of superior jurisdiction, "but entreated him that every thing might be determined by a public decree, and not by any individual's personal authority and command."*

So that if this question be to be determined by

* "Ορα δὲ αὐτὸν μετὰ κοινῆς πάντα ποιῶντα γούμης, ἐξέν ἁνθεντικῶς ἔδ ἄρχικῶς. S. Chrysost. hom. 3. in. act. Apost.

Scripture, it must either be ended by plain places or by obscure; plain places there are none, and these that are with greatest fancy pretended, are expounded by antiquity to contrary purposes. But if obscure places be all the "authority," ἀυθεντία, by what means shall we infallibly find the sense of them? The pope's interpretation, though in all other cases it might be pretended, in this cannot; for it is the thing in question, and therefore cannot determine for itself; either therefore we have also another infallible guide besides the pope, and so we have two foundations and two heads (for this as well as the other upon the same reason) or else (which is indeed the truth) there is no infallible way to be infallibly assured that the pope is infallible. Now it being against the common condition of men, above the pretences of all other governors ecclesiastical, against the analogy of Scripture, and the deportment of the other Apostles, against the œconomy of the church, and St. Peter's own entertainment, the presumption lies against him, and these places, are to be left to their prime intentions, and not put upon the rack, to force them to confess what they never thought.

But now for antiquity, if that be deposed in this question, there are so many circumstances to be considered to reconcile their words and their actions, that the process is more troublesome than the argument can be concluding, or the matter considerable: but I shall a little consider it, so far at least as to shew either antiquity said no such thing as is pretended, or if they did, it is but little considerable, because they did not believe themselves; their practice was the greatest evidence in the world against the pretence of their words. But I am much eased of a long disquisition in this

particular, (for I love not to prove a question by arguments whose authority is in itself as fallible, and by circumstances made as uncertain as the question) by the saying of Æneas Sylvius, that before the Nicene council every man lived to himself, and small respect was had to the church of Rome, which practice could not well consist with the doctrine of their bishop's infallibility, and by consequence supreme judgment and last resolution in matters of faith; but especially by the insinuation and consequent acknowledgement of Bellarmine,* that for 1,000 years together, the fathers knew not of the doctrine of the pope's infallibility, for Nilus, Gerson, Alemain, the divines of Paris, Alphonsus de Castro, and pope Adrian VI. persons who lived 1,400 after Christ, affirm, that infallibility is not seated in the pope's person, that he may err, and sometimes actually hath, which is a clear demonstration that the church knew no such doctrine as this; there had been no decree nor tradition, nor general opinion of the fathers, or of any age before them; and therefore this opinion which Bellarmine would fain blast if he could, yet in his conclusion he says it is not "properly heretical," *proprie hæretica*. A device, and an expression of his own without sense or precedent. But if the fathers had spoken of it and believed it, why may not a disagreeing person as well reject their authority when it is in behalf of Rome, as they of Rome without scruple cast them off when they speak against it? For as Bellarmine being pressed with the authority of Nilus, bishop of Thessalonica, and other fathers, he says that the pope acknowledges no fathers,

* De Rom. Pont. l. 4. c. 2. § secunda sententia.

but they are all his children, and therefore they cannot depose against him; and if that be true, why shall we take their testimonies for him? For if sons depose in their fathers behalf, it is twenty to one, but the adverse party will be cast, and therefore at the best it is but suspicious evidence. But indeed this discourse signifies nothing, but a perpetual uncertainty in such topics, and that where a violent prejudice, or a concerning interest is engaged, men by not regarding what any man says, proclaim to all the world that nothing is certain, but divine authority.

But I will not take advantage of what Bellarmine says, nor what Stapleton, or any one of them all say, for that will be but to press upon personal persuasions, or to urge a general question with a particular defeillance, and the question is never the nearer to an end; for if Bellarmine says any thing that is not to another man's purpose or persuasion, that man will be tried by his own argument, not by another's: and so would every man do that loves his liberty, as all wise men do, and therefore retain it by open violence, or private evasions: but to return.

An authority from Irenæus in this question, and on behalf of the pope's infallibility, or the authority of the see of Rome, or of the necessity of communicating with them is very fallible; for besides that there are almost a dozen answers to the words of the allegation, as is to be seen in those that trouble themselves in this question with the allegation, and answering such authorities, yet if they should make for the affirmative of this question, it is "an affirmation contrary to fact," *protestatio contra factum*. For Irenæus had no such great opinion of pope Victor's infallibility,

that he believed things in the same degree of necessity that the pope did ; for therefore he chides him for excommunicating the Asian bishops ἀθρόως all at a blow in the question concerning Easter-day ; and in a question of faith he expressly disagreed from the doctrine of Rome ; for Irenæus was of the millenary opinion, and believed it to be a tradition apostolical ; now if the church of Rome was of that opinion, then why is she not now ? where is the succession of her doctrine ? But if she was not of that opinion then, and Irenæus was, where was his belief of that church's infallibility ? The same I urge concerning St. Cyprian, who was the head of a sect in opposition to the church of Rome, in the question of rebaptization, and he and the abettors, Firmilian and the other bishops of Cappadocia and the voisinage, spoke harsh words of Stephen, and such as became them not to speak to an infallible doctor, and the supreme head of the church. I will urge none of them to the disadvantage of that see, but only note the satyrs of Firmilian against him, because it is of good use, to shew that it is possible for them in their ill carriage to blast the reputation and efficacy of a great authority : for he says that that church did pretend the authority of the Apostles, “ When in a multitude of its religious ordinances it would depart from the divine rule, and from the practice of the church at Jerusalem, and even defame Peter and Paul as their authorities.”* And a little after, “ I disdain the open and manifest folly of Stephanus, by which the

* Cum in multis sacramentis divinæ rei, à principio discrepet, et ab ecclesia Hierosolymitanâ, et defamet Petrum et Paulum tanquam authores. Epist. Firmiliani contr. Steph. ad Cyprian. Vid. etiam Ep. Cypriani ad Pompeium.

reality of the Christian rock' is disannulled ;” * which words say plainly that for all the goodly pretence of apostolical authority, the church of Rome did then in many things of religion disagree from divine institution (and from the church of Jerusalem, which they had as great esteem of for religion sake, as of Rome for its principality) and that still in pretending to St. Peter and St. Paul they dishonoured those blessed Apostles, and destroyed the honour of their pretence by their untoward prevarication ; which words I confess pass my skill to reconcile them to an opinion of infallibility ; and although they were spoken by an angry person, yet they declare that in Africa they were not then persuaded, as now they were at Rome : “ For Peter, who was chosen by the Lord, did not vainly and proudly arrogate to himself so as to claim the pre-eminence.” † That was their belief then, and how the contrary hath grown up to that height where now it is all the world is witness : and now I shall not need to note concerning St. Jerome, that he gave a compliment to Damasus, that he would not have given to Liberius, “ who did not take away, but gave to you.” - *Qui tecum non colligit spargit.* For it might be true enough of Damasus, who was a good bishop and a right believer ; but if Liberius's name had been put instead of Damasus, the case had been altered with the name ; for St. Jerome did believe and write it so, that Liberius had

* *Justè dedignor apertam et manifestam stultitiam Stephani, per quam veritas Christianæ petræ aboletur.*

† *Nam nec Petrus quem primum Dominus elegit vendicavit sibi aliquid insolenter aut arroganter assumpsit, ut diceret se primum tenere.* Cyprian. *Epist. ad Quintum fratrem.*

subscribed to Arianism.* And if either he or any of the rest had believed the pope could not be a heretic nor his faith fail, but be so good and of so competent authority as to be a rule to Christendom; why did they not appeal to the pope in the Arian controversy? why was the bishop of Rome made a party and a concurrent as other good bishops were, and not a judge and an arbitrator in the question? Why did the fathers prescribe so many rules and cautions and provisos for the discovery of heresy? Why were the Emperors at so much charge, and the church at so much trouble as to call and convene in councils respectively, to dispute so frequently, to write so sedulously, to observe all advantages against their adversaries, and for the truth, and never offered to call for the pope to determine the question in his chair? Certainly no way could have been so expedite, none so concluding and peremptory, none could have convinced so certainly, none could have triumphed so openly over all discrepant as this, if they had known of any such thing as his being infallible, or that he had been appointed by Christ to be the judge of controversies. And therefore I will not trouble this discourse to excuse any more words either pretended or really said to this purpose of the pope, for they would but make books swell, and the question endless: I shall only to this purpose observe, that the old writers were so far from believing the infallibility of the Roman church or bishop, that many bishops and many churches did actually live and continue out of the Roman communion; particularly St. Austin,† who with 217

* De Script. Eccles. in Fortunatiano.

† Ubi illa Augustini et reliquorum prudentia? quis jam ferat

bishops and their successors for 100 years together stood separate from that church, if we may believe their own records: so did Ignatius of Constantinople, St. Chrysostom, St. Cyprian, Firmilian, those bishops of Asia that separated in the question of Easter, and those of Africa in the question of rebaptization: but besides this, most of them had opinions which the church of Rome disavows now, and therefore did so then, or else she hath innovated in her doctrine, which though it be most true and notorious, I am sure she will never confess. But no excuse can be made for St. Austin's disagreeing, and contesting in the question of appeals to Rome, the necessity of communicating infants, the absolute damnation of infants to the pains of hell, if they die before baptism, and divers other particulars. It was a famous act of the bishops of Liguria and Istria, who seeing the pope of Rome consenting to the fifth synod in disparagement of the famous council of Chalcedon, which for their own interests they did not like of, they renounced subjection to his patriarchate, and erected a patriarch at Aquileia who was afterwards translated to Venice, where his name remains to this day. It is also notorious that most of the fathers were of opinion that the souls of the faithful did not enjoy the beatific vision before doomsday; whether Rome was then of that opinion or no, I know not, I am sure now they are not; witness the councils of Florence and Trent; but of this I shall give a more full account afterwards.

crassissimæ ignorantia illam vocem in tot et tantis Patribus? Alan. Cop. dialog. p. 76, 77. Vide etiam Bonifac. II. Epist. ad Eulaliū Alexandrinum. Lindanum Panopli. l. 4. c. 89. in fine. Salmeron Tom. 12. Tract. 68. § ad Canonem. Sander. de visibili Monarchia, l. 7. n. 411. Baron. Tom. 10. A. D. 878.

But if to all this which is already noted, we add that great variety of opinions amongst the fathers and councils in assignation of the canon, they not consulting with the bishop of Rome, nor any of them thinking themselves bound to follow his rule in enumeration of the books of Scripture, I think no more need to be said as to this particular.

8. But now if after all this, there be some popes which were notorious heretics, and preachers of false doctrine, some that made impious decrees both in faith and manners; some that have determined questions with egregious ignorance and stupidity, some with apparent sophistry, and many to serve their own ends, most openly; I suppose then, the infallibility will disband, and we may do to him as to other good bishops, believe him when there is cause; but if there be none, then to use our consciences. "For it cannot be sufficient for a christian, that the pope constantly affirms the propriety of his own command; he must examine for himself, and form his opinion by the divine law."* I would not instance and repeat the errors of dead bishops, if the extreme boldness of the pretence did not make it necessary: but if we may believe Tertullian,† pope Zepherinus approved the prophecies of Montanus, and upon that approbation granted peace to the churches of Asia and Phrygia, till Praxeas persuaded him to revoke his act; but let this rest upon the credit of Tertullian, whether Zepherinus were a Montanist or no; some such thing there was for certain.

* Non enim salvat Christianum quod pontifex constantè affirmat præceptum suum esse justum, sed oportet illud examinari, et se juxta regulam superius datum dirigere. Tract. de interdict. compos. a Theol. Venet. prop. 13.

† Lib. adver. Praxeam.

Pope Vigilius * denied two natures in Christ, and in his epistle to Theodora the Empress, anathematized all them that said he had two natures in one person ; St. Gregory himself permitted priests to give confirmation, which is all one, as if he should permit deacons to consecrate, they being by divine ordinance annexed to the higher orders ; and upon this very ground, Adrianus affirms, that the pope may err “ in his definitions of the articles of faith,” *in definiendis dogmatibus fidei.*† And that we may not fear we shall want instances, we may to secure it, take their own confession, “ there are many heretical decretals,” *nam multæ sunt decretales hæreticæ*, says Occham, as he is cited by Almain, “ and I firmly believe this,” *et firmiter hoc credo*‡ (says he for his own particular) “ but one must not affirm contrary to what is decreed” §. So that we may as well see that it is certain that popes may be heretics, as that it is dangerous to say so ; and therefore there are so few that teach it : all the patriarchs and the bishop of Rome himself subscribed to Arianism,|| (as Baronius confesses ;) and Gratian** affirms that pope Anastasius the second was stricken of God for communicating with the heretic Photinus. I know it will be made light of that Gregory the seventh saith, the very exorcists of the Roman church are superior to princes. But what shall we think of that decretal of Gregory the third, who wrote to Boniface his legate in Germany, “ That they whose wives did not concede to their conjugal wishes on account

* Vid. Liberal. in breviario, cap. 22. Durand. 4. dist. 7. q. 4.

† Quæ de confirm. art. ult.

‡ 3. dist. 24. q. unica.

§ Sed non licet dogmatizare oppositum quoniam sunt determinatæ.

|| A. D. 357. n. 44.

** Dist. 19. c. 9. L. 4. Ep. 2.

of some bodily infirmity, might marry others.”* Was this a doctrine fit for the head of the church, an infallible doctor? It was plainly, if any thing ever was “the doctrine of devils,” and it is noted for such by Gratian, *caus. 32. q. 7. can. quod proposuisti*. Where the gloss also intimates that the same privilege was granted to the Englishmen by Gregory, “because they were newly converted to christianity;” *quia novi erant in fide*. And sometimes we had little reason to expect much better; for, not to instance in that learned discourse in the canon law, *de majoritate et obedientia*,† where the popes supremacy over kings is proved from the first chapter of Genesis, and the pope is the sun, and the emperor is the moon, for that was the fancy of one pope perhaps; though made authentic and doctrinal by him; it was (if it be possible) more ridiculous, that pope Innocent the third, urges, that the Mosaical law was still to be observed, and that upon this argument, “That by the very word Deuteronomy or second law, it is shewn that what is determined there, ought to be observed in the New Testament:”‡ Worse yet; for when there was a corruption crept into the decree called, *Sancta Romana*,§ where instead of these words, “the work of Sedulius written in heroic verses,” *Sedulii opus heroicis versibus descriptum*, all the old copies, till

* Quod illi quòrum uxores infirmitate aliquà morbidæ debitum reddere noluerunt, aliis poterant nubere. Vid. Corranz. Sum. Concil. fol. 218. Edit. Antwerp.

† Cap per vnerabitem, qui filii sint legitimi.

‡ Sanè cum Deuteronomiùm secunda lex interpretetur ex vi vocabuli comprobatur ut quod ibi decernitur in Testamento novo debeat observari.

§ Dist. 15. apud Gratian.

of late, read “written in heretical verses,” *hæreticis versibus descriptum*; this very mistake made many wise men, (as Pierius says,*) yea pope Adrian the sixth, no worse man, believe that all poetry was heretical, because, forsooth, pope Gelasius, whose decree that was, although he believed Sedulius to be a good Catholic, yet as they thought, he concluded his verses to be heretical: but these were ignorances; it hath been worse amongst some others, whose errors have been more malicious. Pope Honorius was condemned by the sixth general synod, and his epistles burnt; and in the seventh action of the eighth synod, the acts of the Roman council under Adrian the second, are recited, in which it is said, that Honorius was justly anathematized, because he was convicted of heresy. Bellarmine says, it is probable that Pope Adrian and the Roman council were deceived with false copies of the sixth synod, and that Honorius was no heretic. To this I say, that although the Roman synod, and the eighth general synod, and pope Adrian, altogether, are better witnesses for the thing than Bellarmine’s conjecture is against it, yet if we allow his conjecture, we shall lose nothing in the whole, for either the pope is no infallible doctor, but may be a heretic as Honorius was, or else a council is to us no infallible determiner; I say, as to us, for if Adrian and the whole Roman council, and the eighth general, were all cozened with false copies of the sixth synod, which was so little a while before them, and whose acts were transacted and kept in the theatre and records of the Catholic church; he is a bold man that will be confident

that he hath true copies now. So that let which they please, stand or fall, let the pope be a heretic, or the councils be deceived and palpably abused, (for the other, we will dispute it upon other instances and arguments when we shall know which part they will choose) in the mean time we shall get in the general what we lose in the particular. This only, this device of saying the copies of the councils were false, was the stratagem of Albertus Pighius* 900 years after the thing was done, of which invention Pighius was presently admonished, blamed, and wished to recant. Pope Nicholas explicated the mystery of the Sacrament with so much ignorance and zeal, that in condemning Berengarius he taught a worse impiety. But what need I any more instances; it is a confessed case by Baronius, by Biel, by Stella, Almain, Occham, and Canus, and generally by the best scholars in the church of Rome†, that a pope may be a heretic, and that some of them actually were so, and no less than three general councils did believe the same thing: viz. sixth, seventh, and eighth as Bellarmine is pleased to acknowledge in his fourth book *de Pontifice Romano*. c. 11. *resp. ad arg.* 4. And the canon *si Papa*. dist. 40. affirms it in express terms, that a pope is judicable and punishable in that case. But there is no wound but some empiric or other will pretend to cure it, and there is a cure for this too. For though it be true that if a pope were a heretic, the church might depose him, yet no pope can be a heretic, not but that the man may, but the pope

* Vid diatrib. de act. 6. et 7æ. synod. præfatione ad lectorem et Dominicum Bannes 22æ. q. 1. a. 10. dub. 2.

† Picus Mirand. in exposit. theorem. 4.

cannot, for he is *ipso facto* no pope, for he is no christian; so Bellarmine:* and so when you think you have him fast, he is gone, and nothing of the pope left; but who sees not the extreme folly of this evasion? For besides that out of fear and caution he grants more than he needs, more than was sought for in the question, the pope hath no more privilege than the abbot of Cluny, for he cannot be a heretic, nor be deposed by a council, for if he be manifestly a heretic, he is *ipso facto* no abbot, for he is no christian; and if the pope be a heretic *privately* and *occultly*, for that he may be accused and judged, said the gloss upon the canon *si Papa dist.* 40. And the abbot of Cluny and one of his meanest monks can be no more, therefore the case is all one. But † this is fitter to make sport with, than to interrupt a serious discourse. And therefore, although the canon *Sancta Romana* approves all the decretals of popes, yet that very decretal hath not decreed it firm enough, but that they are so warily received by them, that when they list they are pleased to dissent from them; and it is evident in the Extravagant of Sixtus IV. *Com de reliquiis*; ‡ who appointed a feast of the immaculate conception, a special office for the day, and indulgences enough to the observers of it: and yet the Dominicans were so far from believing the pope to be infallible, and his decree authentic, that they

* L. 2. c. 30. ubi supra. § est ergo.

† Vide Alphons. à Castr. l. b. I. adv. hæres. c. 4. hoc lemma ridentem affabrè.

‡ Vid etiam Innocentium Serm. 2. de consecrat. pontif. act. 7. 8æ. Synodi. et Concil. 5. sub Symmadio. vide Collat. 8. can. 12. ubi. PP. judicalem sententiam P. vigili in causâ trium Capitulorum damnarunt expressè. Extra. comm. Extrav. grave. Tit. X.

declaimed against it in their pulpits so furiously and so long, till they were prohibited under pain of excommunication, to say the Virgin Mary was conceived in original sin; now what solemnity can be more required for the pope to make a cathedral determination of an article? The article was so concluded, that a feast was instituted for its celebration, and pain of excommunication threatened to them which should preach the contrary; nothing more solemn, nothing more confident and severe: and yet, after all this, to shew that whatsoever those people would have us to believe, they will believe what they list themselves: this thing was not determined *de fide* saith Victorellus; nay, the author of the Gloss of the Canon Law, hath these express words, "With regard to the feast of the conception, nothing is said, because it is not kept as it is in many places, and especially in England; and the reason is, that the Virgin was conceived in sin as well as other saints."* And the commissaries of Sixtus V. and Gregory XIII. did not expunge these words, but left them upon record, not only against a received and more approved opinion of the Jesuits and Franciscans, but also in plain defiance of a decree made by their visible head of the church, who (if ever any thing was decreed by a pope, with an intent to oblige all Christendom) decreed † this to that purpose.

* De festo Conceptionis nihil dicitur quia celebrandum non est, sicut in multis regionibus fit, et maxime in Angliâ, et hæc est ratio, quia in peccatis concepta fuit sicut et ceteri sancti. De Angelo custod. fol. 59. de consecrat. dist. 3. can. pronunciand. gloss. verb. Nativit.

† Hæc in perpetuum valiturâ constitutione statuimus, &c. de reliquiis, &c. Extrav. Com. Sixt. 4. cap. 1.

So that without taking particular notice of it, that egregious sophistry and flattery of the late writers of the Roman church is in this instance; besides divers others before mentioned, clearly made invalid. For here the bishop of Rome, not as a private doctor, but as pope; not by declaring his own opinion, but with an intent to oblige the church, gave sentence in a question which the Dominicans will still account “undetermined,” *pro non determinatâ*. And every decretal recorded in the canon law, if it be false in the matter, is just such another instance: and Alphonsus à Castro says it to the same purpose, in the instance of Celestine dissolving marriages for heresy; “Whose error ought not to be imputed to negligence alone, so that we may say he erred as a private individual and not as a pope, because this decision of Celestine is found in the ancient decretals, in the chapter concerning the conversion of infidels, which I myself have seen and read.”* And therefore it is a most intolerable folly to pretend that the pope cannot err in his chair, though he may err in his closet, and may maintain a false opinion even to his death: for besides that, it is sottish to think that either he would not have the world of his own opinion (as all men naturally would) or that if he were set in his chair, he would determine contrary to himself in his study (and therefore to represent it as possible, they are fain to flie to a miracle for which they have no colour, neither instructions, nor insinuation, nor warrant, nor

* Neque Cælestini error talis fuit qui soli negligentiae, imputari debeat, ita ut illum errasse dicamus velut privatam personam et non ut papam, quoniam hujusmodi Cælestini definitio habetur in antiquis decretalibus in cap. laudabilem, titulo de conversione infidelium; quam ego ipse vidi et legi. lib. 1. adv. hæres. cap. 4.

promise; besides that, it were impious and unreasonable to depose him for heresy, who may so easily, even by setting himself in his chair, and reviewing his theorems, be cured :) it is also against a very great experience: for besides the former allegations, it is most notorious, that pope Alexander III. in a council at Rome of three hundred archbishops and bishops, A. D. 1179, condemned Peter Lombard of heresy in a matter of great concernment, no less than something about the incarnation; from which sentence he was, after thirty-six years abiding it, absolved by pope Innocent III, without repentance or dereliction of the opinion. Now if this sentence was not a cathedral dictate, as solemn and great as could be expected, or as is said to be necessary to oblige all Christendom, let the great hyperaspists of the Roman church be judges, who tell us that a particular council with the pope's confirmation is made oecumenical by adoption, and is infallible, and obliges all Christendom; so Bellarmine: and therefore he says, that it is "rash, erroneous, and almost heretical;" *temerarium, erroneum, et proximum heræsi*,* to deny it; but whether it be or not, it is all one, as to my purpose: for it is certain, that in a particular council confirmed by the pope, if ever; then and there the pope sate himself in his chair, and it is as certain that he sate besides the cushion and determined ridiculously and falsely in this case:† but this is a device for which there is no Scripture, no tradition, no one dogmatical resolute saying of any father, Greek or Latin, for above 1000 years

* L. 2. de Concil. cap. 5.

† De Pontif. Rom. c. 14. § respondeo. In 3. sent. d. 24. q. in concl. 6. dub. 6. in fine.

after Christ: and themselves when they list can acknowledge as much. And therefore Bellarmine's saying, I perceive is believed by them to be true: that there are many things in the decretal epistles,* which make not articles to be *de fide*. And therefore, "We are not implicitly to believe whatever the pope determines," † says Almain: And this serves their turns in every thing they do not like, and therefore I am resolved it shall serve my turn also for something, and that is, that the matter of the pope's infallibility is so ridiculous and improbable, that they do not believe it themselves: some of them clearly practised the contrary, and although pope Leo X. hath determined the pope to be above a council, yet the Sorbonne to this day scorn it at the very heart. And I might urge upon them that scorn that Almain truly enough by way of argument alledges. ‡ It is a wonder that they who affirm the pope cannot err in judgment, do not also affirm that he cannot sin: they are like enough to say so, says he, if the vicious lives of the popes did not make a daily confutation of such flattery: now for my own particular, I am as confident and think it as certain, that popes are actually deceived in matters of Christian doctrine, as that they do prevaricate the laws of Christian piety: and therefore, § Alphonsus à Castro calls them "impudent flatterers

* Proverbialitèr olim dictu erat, de decretalibus. Malè cum rebus humanis actum esse, ex quo decretis alæ accesserunt. *scil.* cum decretales post decretum Gratiani sub nomine Gregorii noni edebantur.

† Non est necessariò credendum determinatis per summum pontificem.

‡ De Authorit. Eccles. cap. 10. in fine.

§ L. 1. ca. 4. advers. hæres. edit. Paris 1534. In seqq. non expurgantur ista verba. et idem sensus manet.

of the pope ;” *impudentes papa assentatores*, that ascribe to him infallibility in judgment or interpretation of Scripture.

But if themselves did believe it heartily, what excuse is there in the world, for the strange uncharitableness or supine negligence of the popes, that they do not set themselves in their chair and write infallible commentaries, and determine all controversies without error, and blast all heresies with the word of their mouth, declare what is and what is not *de fide*, that his disciples and confidants may agree upon it ; reconcile the Franciscans and Dominicans, and expound all mysteries ? For it cannot be imagined but he that was endued with so supreme power in order to so great ends, was also fitted with proportionable, that is, extraordinary personal abilities, succeeding and derived upon the persons of all the popes. And then the doctors of his church, need not trouble themselves with study, nor writing explanations of Scripture, but might wholly attend to practical devotion, and leave all their scholastical wranglings, the distinguishing opinions of their orders, and they might have a fine church, something like fairy land, or Lucian’s kingdom in the moon : but if they say they cannot do this when they list, but when they are moved to it by the Spirit, then we are never the nearer ; for so may the bishop of Angouleme write infallible commentaries when the Holy Ghost moves him to it, for I suppose his motions are not ineffectual, but he will sufficiently assist us in performing of what he actually moves us to : but among so many hundred decrees which the popes of Rome have made, or confirmed and attested, (which is all one,) I would fain know in how many of them

did the Holy Ghost assist them? If they know it, let them declare it, that it may be certain which of their decretals are *de fide*; for as yet none of his own church knows; if they do not know, then neither can we know it from them, and then we are as uncertain as ever; and besides the Holy Ghost may possibly move him, and he by his ignorance of it, may neglect so profitable a motion, and then his promise of infallible assistance will be to very little purpose, because it is with very much fallibility applicable to practise: and therefore it is absolutely useless to any man, or any church; because, suppose it settled in *Thesi*, that the pope is infallible, yet whether he will do his duty, and perform those conditions of being assisted, which are required of him, or whether he be a secret Simoniack (for if he be, he is *ipso facto*, no pope) or whether he be a bishop, or priest, or a Christian, being all uncertain; every one of these depending upon the intention and power of the baptizer or ordainer, which also are fallible, because they depend upon the honesty and power of other men; we cannot be infallibly certain of any pope that he is infallible, and therefore when our questions are determined, we are never the nearer, but may hug ourselves in an imaginary truth, the certainty of finding truth out depending upon so many fallible and contingent circumstances. And therefore, the thing, if it were true, being so to no purpose, it is to be presumed that God never gave a power so impertinently, and from whence no benefit can accrue to the Christian church, for whose use and benefit, if at all, it must needs have been appointed.

But I am too long in this impertinency: if I

were bound to call any man master upon earth, and to believe him upon his own affirmative and authority; I would of all men least follow him, that pretends he is infallible and cannot prove it. For that he cannot prove it, makes me as uncertain as ever, and that he pretends to infallibility, makes him careless of using such means which will morally secure those wise persons, who knowing their own aptness to be deceived, use what endeavours they can to secure themselves from error, and so become the better and more probable guides.

Well! thus far we are come: although we are secured in fundamental points from involuntary error, by the plain, express, and dogmatical places of Scriptures, yet in other things we are not, but may be invincibly mistaken, because of the obscurity and difficulty in the controverted parts of Scripture, by reason of the uncertainty of the means of its interpretation, since tradition is of an uncertain reputation, and sometimes evidently false; councils are contradictory to each other, and therefore certainly are equally deceived many of them, and therefore all may: and then the popes of Rome are very likely to mislead us, but cannot ascertain us of truth in matter of question; and in this world we believe in part, and Prophecy in part, and this imperfection shall never be done away till we be translated to a more glorious state; either we must throw our chances, and get truth by accident or predestination, or else we must lie safe in a mutual toleration, and private Liberty of persuasion, unless some other anchor can be thought upon where we may fasten our floating vessels, and ride safely.

SECTION VIII.

Of the Disability of Fathers, or Writers Ecclesiastical, to determine our Questions, with Certainty and Truth.

THERE are some that think they can determine all questions in the world by two or three sayings of the fathers, or by the consent of so many as they will please to call a concurrent testimony: but this consideration will soon be at an end; for if the fathers, when they are witnesses of tradition, do not always speak truth, as it happened in the case of Papias and his numerous followers for almost three ages together, then is their testimony more improbable when they dispute or write commentaries.

2. The fathers of the first ages spake unitedly concerning divers questions of secret theology, and yet were afterwards contradicted by one personage of great reputation, whose credit had so much influence upon the world, as to make the contrary opinion become popular; why then may not we have the same Liberty, when so plain an uncertainty is in their persuasions, and so great contrariety in their doctrines? But this is evident in the case of absolute predestination, which till St. Austin's time no man preached, but all taught the contrary, and yet the reputation of this one excellent man altered the scene. But if he might dissent from so general a doctrine, why may not we do so too, it being pretended that he is so excellent a precedent to be followed, if we have the same reason? He had no more authority nor

dispensation to dissent, than any bishop hath now. And therefore St. Austin hath dealt ingeniously, and as he took this Liberty to himself, so he denies it not to others, but indeed forces them to preserve their own Liberty: and therefore when St. Jerome* had a great mind to follow the fathers in a point that he fancied, and the best security he had, was, “you may allow me to err with such men,” *patiaris me cum talibus errare*; St. Austin would not endure it, but answered his reason, and neglected the authority. And therefore it had been most unreasonable that we should do that now, though in his behalf, which he towards greater personages (for so they were then) at that time judged to be unreasonable. It is a plain recession from antiquity, which was determined by the council of Florence, “that the souls of the saints are received immediately into heaven, and behold God himself as if he is three and one.”† As who please to try, may see it dogmatically resolved to the contrary by Justin Martyr,‡ Irenæus,§ by Origen,|| St. Chrysostom,** Theodoret,†† Arethas Cæsariensis,‡‡ Euthymius,§§ who may answer for the Greek Church, and it is plain that it was the opinion of the Greek Church by that great difficulty the Romans had of bringing the Greeks to subscribe to the Florentine council; where the Latins acted their master-piece of wit and stratagem, the greatest that hath been till the

* Sess. ult.

† *Piorum animas purgatas, &c. mox in Cælum recipi, et intueri clarè ipsum Deum trinum et unum sicuti est.*

‡ Q. 60. ad Christian.

** Hom. 39. in 1 Cor.

§ Lib. 5.

†† In c. 11. ad Heb.

|| Hom. 7. in Levit.

‡‡ In c. 6. ad Apoc.

§§ In 16. c. Luc.

famous and superpolitic design of Trent. And for the Latin Church, Tertullian,* St. Ambrose,† St. Austin,‡ St. Hilary,§ Prudentius,|| Lactantius,** Victorinus Martyr,†† and St. Bernard,‡‡ are known to be of opinion that the souls of the saints are in “secret places and outward courts or halls,” *abditis receptaculis, et exterioribus atriis*, where they expect the resurrection of their bodies, and the glorification of their souls, and though they all believe them to be happy, yet they enjoy not the beatific vision before the resurrection: now there being so full a consent of fathers (for many more may be added) and the decree of pope John XXII, besides, who was so confident for his decree that he commanded the University of Paris to swear that they would preach it and no other, and that none should be promoted to degrees in theology, that did not swear the like, (as Occham,§§ Gerson,||| Marsilius,*** and Adrianus††† report :) since it is esteemed lawful to dissent from all these, I hope no man will be so unjust to press other men to consent to an authority which he himself judges to be incompetent. These two great instances are enough, but if more were necessary, I could instance in the opinion of the Chiliasts, maintained by the second and third centuries and disavowed ever since: in the doc-

* Lib. 4. adv. Mar.

§ In Psal. 138.

† L. 2. de Cain. c. 2.

|| De exeq. defunctor.

‡ Ep. 111. ad Fortunatianum.

** L. 7. c. 21.

†† In c. 6. Apoc.

‡‡ Serm. 3. de om. sanctis. Vid. enim, St. Aug. in Enchir. c. 108. et l. 12. de civit. Dei. c. 9. et in Ps. 36. et in l. 1. retract. c. 14. Vid. insuper testimonia quæ collegit, Spala. l. 5. c. 8. n. 98. de repub. Eccl. et Sixt. Senens. l. 6. annot. 345.

§§ In oper. 90. dierum.

*** In 4. sent. q. 13. a. 3.

||| Serm. de Paschal.

††† In 4. de Sacram. confirmat.

trine of communicating infants, taught and practised as necessary by the fourth and fifth centuries, and detested by the Latin Church in all the following ages: in the variety of opinions concerning the very form of baptism, some keeping close to the institution and the words of its first sanction, others affirming it to be sufficient, if it be administered “in the name of Christ,” *in nomine Christi*;* particularly St. Ambrose, pope Nicholas the First, V. Bede,† and St. Bernard,‡ besides some writers of after ages as Hugo de St. Victore, and the doctors generally his contemporaries. And it would not be inconsiderable to observe, that if any synod, general, national, or provincial, be receded from by the church of the later age, (as there have been very many) then, so many fathers as were then assembled and united in opinion, are esteemed no authority to determine our persuasions. Now, suppose 200 fathers assembled in such a council, if all they had written books and authorities, 200 authorities had been alledged in confirmation of an opinion, it would have made a mighty noise, and loaded any man with an insupportable prejudice that should dissent: and yet every opinion maintained against the authority of any one council, though but provincial, is in its proportion such a violent recession and neglect of the authority and doctrine of so many fathers as were then assembled, who did as much declare their opinion in those assemblies by their suffrages, as if they had written it in so many books; and their opinion is more considerable in the assembly than in their writings,

* De consecrat. dist. 4. c. à quodam Judæo.

† In c. 10. Act.

‡ Ep. 340.

because it was more deliberate, assisted, united, and more dogmatical. In pursuance of this observation, it is to be noted by way of instance, that St. Austin and two hundred and seventeen bishops, and all their successors* for a whole age together, did consent in denying appeals to Rome; and yet the authority of so many fathers (all true Catholics) is of no force now at Rome in this question; but if it be in a matter they like, one of these fathers alone is sufficient. The doctrine of St. Austin alone brought in the festival and veneration of the Assumption of the blessed Virgin, and the hard sentence passed at Rome upon unbaptized infants and the Dominican opinion concerning pre-determination, derived from him alone as from their original: so that if a father speaks for them, it is wonderful to see what tragedies are stirred up against them that dissent, as is to be seen in that excellent nothing of Campian's ten reasons. But if the fathers be against them, then "the fathers have, in some things, mistook in no slight degree, and some of them most egregiously,†" it is certain the chiefest of them have foully erred. Nay, Posa, Salmeron, and Wadding, in the question of the immaculate conception, make no scruple to dissent from antiquity; to prefer new doctors before the old, and to justify

* Vid. Epist. Bonifacii II. apud Nicolinum, Tom. 2. Concil. pag. 544. et exemplar precum Eulalii apud eundem. ibid. p. 525. Qui anathematiz at omnes decifores suos qui in in ea causa Romæ se opponendo rectæ fidei regulam prævaricari sunt, inter quos tamen fuit Augustinus, quem pro maledicto Cælestinus tacite agnoscit; admittendo sc. exemplar precum. Vid. Doctor. Marta. de jurisdict. part 4. p. 273. et Erasm. annot. in Hierom. præfat. in Daniel.

† Patres in quibusdam non leviter lapsi sunt, says Bellarmine, and constat quosdam ex præcipuis. De verb. Dei. l. 3. c. 10. § dices. X

themselves, bring instances in which the church of Rome had determined against the fathers. And it is not excuse enough to say that singly the fathers may err, but if they concur, they are certain testimony. For there is no question this day disputed by persons that are willing to be tried by the fathers, so generally attested on either side, as some points are which both sides dislike severally or conjunctly. And therefore it is not honest for either side to press the authority of the fathers, as a concluding argument in matter of dispute, unless themselves will be content to submit in all things to the testimony of an equal number of them, which I am certain neither side will do.

3. If I should reckon all the particular reasons against the certainty of this topic, it would be more than needs as to this question, and therefore I will abstain from all disparagement of those worthy personages, who were excellent lights to their several dioceses and cures. And therefore I will not instance that Clemens Alexandrinus* taught that Christ felt no hunger or thirst, but eat only to make demonstration of the verity of his human nature: nor that St. Hilary taught that Christ in his sufferings had no sorrow; nor that Origen taught the pains of hell not to have an eternal duration: nor that St. Cyprian taught rebaptization; nor that Athenagoras condemned second marriages; nor that St. John Damascen said, Christ only prayed in appearance, not really and in truth; I will let them all rest in peace, and their memories in honour; for if I should enquire into the particular probations of this article, I must do to them as I should be forced to do now; if any

* Strom. l. 3. et 6.

man should say that the wrisings of the school-men were excellent argument and authority to determine men's persuasions; I must consider their writings, and observe their defaillances, their contradictions, the weakness of their arguments, the mis-allegations of Scripture, their inconsequent deductions, their false opinions, and all the weaknesses of humanity, and the failings of their persons; which no good man is willing to do, unless he be compelled to it by a pretence that they are infallible, or that they are followed by men even into errors or impiety. And therefore since there is enough in the former instances, to cure any such mis-persuasion and prejudice, I will not instance in the innumerable particularities that might persuade us to keep our Liberty entire or to use it discreetly. For it is not to be denied but that great advantages are to be made by their writings, "all of them containing some probable things according to their wisdom."* If one wise man says a thing, it is an argument to me to believe it in its degree of probation, that is, proportionable to such an assent as the authority of a wise man can produce, and when there is nothing against it that is greater; and so in proportion higher and higher as more wise men (such as the old doctors were) do affirm it. But that which I complain of is that we look upon wise men that lived long ago with so much veneration and mistake, that we reverence them not for having been wise men, but that they lived long since. But when the question is concerning authority, there must be something to build it on; a divine commandment,

* *Et probabile est quod omnibus, quod pluribus, quod sapientibus videtur.*

human sanction, excellency of spirit, and greatness of understanding; on which things all human authority is regularly built. But now if we had lived in their times (for so we must look upon them now, as they did who without prejudice beheld them) I suppose we should then have beheld them, as we in England look on those prelates, who are of great reputation for learning and sanctity; here only is the difference; when persons are living, their authority is depressed by their personal defailances, and the contrary interests of their contemporaries, which disband when they are dead, and leave their credit entire upon the reputation of those excellent books, and monuments of learning and piety which are left behind: but beyond this, why the bishop of Hippo shall have greater authority than the bishop of the Canaries, "other things being equal," *cæteris paribus*, I understand not. For did they that lived (to instance) in St. Austin's time believe all that he wrote? If they did, they were much to blame, or else himself was to blame for retracting much of it a little before his death: and if while he lived, his affirmative was no more authority, than derives from the credit of one very wise man, against whom also very wise men were opposed; I know not why this authority should prevail further now; for there is nothing added to the strength of his reason since that time, but only that he hath been in great esteem with posterity: and if that be all, why the opinion of the following ages shall be of more force than the opinion of the first ages, against whom St. Austin in many things clearly did oppose himself, I see no reason; or whether the first ages were against him or no, yet that he is approved by the following ages is no

better argument; for it makes his authority not to be innate, but derived from the opinion of others, and so to be precarious, and to depend upon others, who if they should change their opinions, and such examples there have been many, then there were nothing left to urge our consent to him; which when it was at the best, was only this, because he had the good fortune to be believed by them that came after, he must be so still. And because it was no argument for the old doctors before him, this will not be very good in his behalf: the same I say of any company of them; I say not so of all of them, it is to no purpose to say it, for there is no question this day in contestation, in the explication of which all the old writers did consent: in the assignation of the canon of Scripture, they never did consent for six hundred years together, and then by that time the bishops had agreed indifferently well, and but indifferently, upon that, they fell out in twenty more; and except it be in the Apostles' creed, and articles of such nature, there is nothing which may with any colour be called a consent, much less tradition universal.

4. But I will rather chuse to shew the uncertainty of this topic by such an argument, which was not in the fathers' power to help, such as makes no invasion upon their great reputation, which I desire should be preserved as sacred as it ought. For other things, let who please read Mr. Daillé "on the proper Use of the Fathers," but I shall only consider that the writings of the fathers have been so corrupted by the intermixture of heretics, so many false books put forth in their names, so many of their writings lost which would more clearly have explicated their

sense; and at last an open profession made, and a trade of making the fathers speak, not what themselves thought, but what other men pleased; that it is a great instance of God's providence and care of his church, that we have so much good preserved in the writings which we receive from the fathers, and that all truth is not as clear gone as is the certainty of their great authority and reputation.

The publishing books with the inscription of great names began in St. Paul's time; for some had troubled the church of Thessalonica with a false epistle in St. Paul's name, against the inconvenience of which he arms them in 2 Thess. ii. 1. And this increased daily in the church. The Arians wrote an epistle to Constantine,* under the name of Athanasius, and the Eutychians wrote against Cyrill of Alexandria, under the name of Theodoret; and of the age in which the seventh synod was kept, Erasmus reports, "that books under the assumed names of illustrious men were extremely plentiful."† It was then a public business, and a trick not more base than public: but it was more ancient then so, and it is memorable in the books attributed to St. Basil, containing thirty chapters *de Spiritu Sancto*, whereof fifteen were plainly added by another hand under the covert of St. Basil, as appears in the difference of the style, in the impertinent digressions against the custom of that excellent man, by some passages contradictory to others of St. Basil, by citing Meletius as dead before him, who yet lived three

* Apolog. Athanas. ad Constant.

† Libris falso celebrium virorum titulo commendatis scatere omnia. Vid. Baron. A. D. 553.

years* after him, and by the very frame and manner of the discourse; and yet it was so handsomely carried, and so well served the purposes of men, that it was quoted under the title of St. Basil by many, but without naming the number of chapters, and by St. John Damascen in these words, “Basil, in a work containing thirty chapters, to Amphilochius;”† and to the same purpose, and in the number of 27 and 29 chapters he is cited by Photius,‡ by Euthymius, by Burchard, by Zonaras, Balsamon and Nicephorus; but for this, see more in Erasmus’ preface upon this book of St. Basil. There is an epistle goes still under the name of St. Jerome *ad Demetriadem virginem*, and is of great use in the question of predestination, with its appendices, and yet a very learned man§ 800 years ago did believe it to be written by a Pelagian, and undertakes to confute divers parts of it, as being high and confident Pelagianism, and written by Julianus Episc. Eclanensis; but Gregorius Ariminensis|| from St. Austin, affirms it to have been written by Pelagius himself. I might instance in too many; there is not any one of the fathers who is esteemed author of any considerable number of books that hath escaped untouched; but the abuse in this kind hath been so evident, that now if any interested person of any side be pressed with an authority very pregnant against him, he thinks to escape by accusing the edition, or the author, or

* Vid. Baron. in Annal.

† Basilus in opere triginta capitum de Spiritu S. ad Amphilochium. L. 1. de imagin. orat. 1.

‡ Nomocan. tit. 1. cap. 3.

§ V. Beda de gratiâ Christi adv. Julianum.

|| Greg. Arim. in 2. sent. dist. 26. q. 1. a. 3.

the hands it passed through, or at last he therefore suspects it, because it makes against him; both sides being resolved that they are in the right, the authorities that they admit, they will believe not to be against them; and they which are too plainly against them, shall be no authorities: and indeed the whole world hath been so much abused, that every man thinks he hath reason to suspect whatsoever is against him, that is, what he please; which proceeding only produces this truth, that there neither is nor can be any certainty, nor very much probability in such allegations.

But there is a worse mischief than this, besides those very many which are not yet discovered, which like the pestilence destroys in the dark, and grows into inconvenience more insensibly and more irremediably, and that is, corruption of particular places, by inserting words and altering them to contrary senses: a thing which the fathers of the sixth general synod complained of concerning the constitutions of St. Clement; "In which certain corruptions of the true faith are introduced into some passages which have obscured the elegant and beautiful form of the divine decrees."* And so also have his recognitions, so have his epistles been used, if at least they were his at all, particularly the fifth decretal epistle that goes under the name of St. Clement, in which community of wives is taught upon the authority of St. Luke, saying the first Christians had all things common; if all things, then wives also says the epistle; a forgery like to have been done

* Quibus jam olim ab iis qui à fidè aliena sentium adulterina quædam etiam pietate aliena introducta sunt quæ divinorum nobis decretorum elegantem et venustam speciem obscuraverunt. Can. 2.

by some Nicolaitan, or other impure person. There is an epistle of Cyrill extant to Successus, bishop of Diocæsarea, in which he relates that he was asked by Budus, bishop of Emessa, whether he did approve of the epistle of Athanasius to Epictetus, bishop of Corinth, and that his answer was, “if the copies you have are not corrupted, for many are so by the enemies of the church.”* And this was done even while the authors themselves were alive; for so Dionysius of Corinth complained that his writings were corrupted by heretics, and pope Leo, that his epistle to Flavianus was perverted by the Greeks: and in the synod of Constantinople before quoted (the sixth synod) Macarius and his disciples were convicted “of wishing to garble or corrupt the writings of the saints.”† Thus the third chapter of St. Cyprian’s book *de unitate Ecclesiæ*, in the edition of Pamelius, suffered great alteration: these words, “the primacy is given to Peter,” *primatus Petro datur*, wholly inserted; and these “the church is founded upon the chair of St. Peter,” *super cathedram Petri fundata est ecclesia*; and whereas it was before, “Christ builds his church upon one,” *super unum ædificat ecclesiam Christus*, that not being enough, they have made it “upon that one,” *super illum unum*. Now these additions are against the faith of all old copies, before Minutius and Pamelius, and against Gratian, even after himself had been chastised by the Roman correctors, the commissaries of Gregory XIII, as is to be seen where these words are alledged, “the

* Si hæc apud vos scripta non sint adultera: nam plura ex his ab hostibus ecclesiæ deprehenduntur esse depravata. Euseb. l. 4. c. 23.

† Quod sanctorum testimonia aut truncârint aut depravârint. Act. 8. vid. etiam. Synod 7. act. 4.

Lord speaks to Peter," *loquitur Dominus ad Petrum*.* So that we may say of Cyprian's works as Pamelius himself said concerning his writings and the writings of other of the fathers, "whence we gather that the writings of Cyprian and of others of the fathers are in various ways corrupted by the transcribers."† But Gratian himself could do as fine a fete when he listed, or else somebody did it for him, and it was in this very question, their beloved article of the pope's supremacy; for he quotes these words out of St. Ambrose, "they do not hold the inheritance of Peter who do not possess the seat of Peter;"‡ "faith," *fidem*, not "seat," *sedem*, it is in St. Ambrose; but this error was made authentic by being inserted into the code of the law of the Catholic Church; and considering how little notice the clergy had of antiquity, but what was transmitted to them by Gratian, it will be no great wonder that all this part of the world swallowed such a bole and the opinion that was wrapped in it. But I need not instance in Gratian any further, but refer any one that desires to be satisfied concerning this collection of his, to Augustinus, archbishop of Tarracon in *emendatione Gratiani*,§ where he shall find fopperies and corruptions good store noted by that learned man: but that the *Indices Expurgatorii* commanded by authority, and practised with

* Decret. c. 24. Q. 1. can.

† Unde colligimus Cypriani scripta ut et aliorum veterum à librariis variè fuisse interpolata. Annot. Cyprian. super. Concil. Carthag. n. 1.

‡ Non habent Petri hæreditatem qui non habent Petri sedem. De pænit. dist. 1. c. potest fieri.

§ Vid. Ind. Expurg. Belg. in Bertram. et Flandr. Hispan. Portugal. Neopolitan. Romanum. Junium in præfat. ad Ind. Expurg. Belg. Hasen mullerum, pag. 275. Withrington. Apolog. num. 449.

public licence, profess to alter and correct the sayings of the fathers, and to reconcile them to the Catholic sense by putting in and leaving out, is so great an imposture, so unchristian a proceeding, that it hath made the faith of all books and all authors justly to be suspected; for considering their infinite diligence and great opportunity, as having had most of the copies in their own hands, together with an unsatisfiable desire of prevailing in their right or in their wrong, they have made an absolute destruction of this topic, and when the fathers speak Latin,* or breathe in a Roman diocese, although the providence of God does infinitely over-rule them, and that it is next to a miracle that in the monuments of antiquity there is no more found that can pretend for their advantage than there is, which indeed is infinitely inconsiderable; yet our questions and uncertainties are infinitely multiplied instead of a probable and reasonable determination. For since the Latins always complained of the Greeks for privately corrupting the ancient records both of councils and fathers,† and now the Latins make open profession, not of corrupting, but of correcting their writings (that is the word) and at the most it was but a human authority, and that of persons not always learned, and very often deceived; the whole matter is so unreasonable, that it is not worth a further disquisition. But if any one desires to enquire further, he may be satisfied in Erasmus, in Henry and Robert Stephens, in their prefaces before the editions of fathers, and

* Videat Lector Andreæm Cristovium in Bello Jesuitico, et Joh. Reinolds in libr. de idol. Rom.

† Vid. Ep. Nicolai ad Michael. Imperat.

their observations upon them: in Bellarmine *de script. Eccles.* in Dr. Reynolds, *de libris Apocryphis*, in Scaliger, and Robert Coke, of Leeds in Yorkshire, in his book *De censura Patrum*.

SECTION IX.

Of the incompetency of the Church in its diffusive capacity to be judge of controversies, and the impertinency of that pretence of the Spirit.

AND now after all these considerations of the several topics, tradition, councils, popes and ancient doctors of the church, I suppose it will not be necessary, to consider the authority of the church apart. For the church either speaks by tradition, or by a representative body in a council, by popes, or by the fathers: for the church is not a *chimæra*, not a shadow, but a company of men believing in Jesus Christ, which men either speak by themselves immediately, or by their rulers, or by their proxies and representatives; now I have considered it in all senses but in its diffusive capacity: in which capacity she cannot be supposed to be a judge of controversies, both because in that capacity she cannot teach us, as also because if by a judge we mean all the church diffused in all its parts and members, so there can be no controversy, for if all men be of that opinion, then there is no question contested; if they be not all of a mind, how can the whole diffusive Catholic church be pretended in defiance of any one article, where the diffusive church being divided, part

goes this way, and part another? But if it be said, the greatest part must carry it; besides that it is impossible for us to know which way the greatest part goes in many questions, it is not always true that the greater part is the best, sometimes the contrary is most certain, and it is often very probable, but it is always possible. And when paucity of followers was objected to Liberius,* he gave this in answer, there was a time when but three children of the captivity resisted the king's decree. And Athanasius† wrote on purpose against those that did judge of truth by multitudes, and indeed it concerned him so to do, when he alone stood in the gap against numerous armies of the Arians.

But if there could in this case be any distinct consideration of the church, yet to know which is the true church is so hard to be found out, that the greatest questions of Christendom are judged before you can get to your judge, and then there is no need of him. For those questions which are concerning the judge of questions, must be determined before you can submit to his judgment, and if you can yourselves determine those great questions which consist much in universalities, then also you may determine the particulars as being of less difficulty. And he that considers how many notes there are given to know the true church, no less than fifteen by Bellarmine, and concerning every one of them almost whether it be a certain note or no, there are very many questions and uncertainties, and when it is resolved which are the notes, there is more dispute about the application of these notes than of the "original

* Theod. l. 2. c. 16. hist.

† Tom. 2.

question," Πρωτοκρινόμενον, will quickly be satisfied that he had better sit still than to go round about a difficult and troublesome passage, and at last get no further, but return to the place from whence he first set out. And there is one note amongst the rest, Holiness of Doctrine, that is, so as to have nothing false either in "the doctrine of faith or morals," *doctrina fidei or morum*, (for so Bellarmine explicates it) which supposes all your controversies, judged before they can be tried by the authority of the church, and when we have found out all true doctrine (for that is necessary to judge of the church by, that as Saint Austin's council is "we should look for the church in the words of Christ," *ecclesiam in verbis Christi investigemus*) then we are bound to follow because we judge it true, not because the church hath said it, and this is to judge of the church by her doctrine, not of the doctrine by the church. And indeed it is the best and only way: but then how to judge of that doctrine will be afterwards inquired into. In the mean time, the church, that is, the governors of the churches are to judge for themselves, and for all those who cannot judge for themselves. For others, they must know that their governors judge for them too, so as to keep them in peace and obedience, though not for the determination of their private persuasions. For the œconomy of the church requires that her authority be received by all her children. Now this authority is divine in its original, for it derives immediately from Christ, but is human in its ministration. We are to be led like men, not like beasts; a rule is prescribed for the guides themselves to follow, as we are to follow the guides: and although in matters indeterminable or ambiguous, the pre-

sumption lies on behalf of the governors, (for we do nothing for authority if we suffer it not to weigh that part down of an indifferency and a question which she chooses) yet if there be “a manifest error,” *error manifestus*, as it often happens, or if the church governors themselves be rent into innumerable sects, as it is this day in Christendom, then we are to be as wise as we can in choosing our guides, and then to follow so long as that reason remains for which we first chose them. And even in that government which was an immediate sanction of God, I mean the ecclesiastical synagogue, where God had consigned the high-priests’ authority with a menace of death to them that should disobey, that all the world might know the meaning and extent of such precepts, and that there is a limit beyond which they cannot command, and we ought not to obey: it came once to that pass, that if the priest had been obeyed in his conciliary decrees, the whole nation had been bound to believe the condemnation of our blessed Saviour to have been just, and at another time the Apostles must no more have preached in the name of JESUS. But here was manifest error. And the case is the same to every man that invincibly and therefore innocently believes it so. “Obey God rather than man,” *Deo potius quàm hominibus* is our rule in such cases. For although every man is bound to follow his guide, unless he believes his guide to mislead him; yet when he sees reason against his guide, it is best to follow his reason; for though in this he may fall into error, yet he will escape the sin; he may do violence to truth, but never to his own conscience; and an honest error is better than an hypocritical profession of truth, or a

violent luxation of the understanding, since if he retains honesty and simplicity, he cannot err in a matter of faith or absolute necessity; God's goodness hath secured all honest and careful persons from that; for other things, he must follow the best guides he can, and he cannot be obliged to follow better than God hath given him.

And there is yet another way pretended of infallible expositions of Scripture; and that is, by the Spirit. But of this I shall say no more, but that it is impertinent as to this question. For put the case, the Spirit is given to some men enabling them to expound infallibly, yet because this is but a private assistance, and cannot be proved to others, this infallible assistance may determine my own assent, but shall not enable me to prescribe to others, because it were unreasonable I should, unless I could prove to him that I have the Spirit, and so can secure him from being deceived, if he relies upon me. In this case I may say, as St. Paul, in the case of praying with the Spirit, "*He verily giveth thanks well, but the other is not edified.*" So that let this pretence be as true as it will, it is sufficient that it cannot be of consideration in this question.

The result of all is this; since it is not reasonable to limit and prescribe to all mens' understandings by any external rule in the interpretation of difficult places of Scripture which is our rule; since no man nor company of men is secure from error, or can secure us that they are free from malice, interest and design; and since all the ways by which we usually are taught, as tradition, councils, decretals, &c. are very uncertain in the matter, in their authority, in their being legitimate and natural, and many of them certainly false, and nothing

certain but the divine authority of Scripture, in which all that is necessary is plain, and much of that that is not necessary is very obscure, intricate and involved; either we must set up our rest, only upon articles of faith, and plain places, and be incurious of other obscurer revelations, (which is a duty for persons of private understandings, and of no public function) or if we will search further (to which in some measure the guides of others are obliged) it remains we inquire how men may determine themselves, so as to do their duty to God, and not to disserve the church; that every such man may do what he is bound to, in his personal capacity, and as he relates to the public as a public minister.

SECTION X.

Of the authority of Reason, and that it, proceeding upon best grounds, is the best judge.

HERE then I consider, that although no man may be trusted to judge for all others, unless this person were infallible and authorized so to do, which no man nor no company of men is, yet every man may be trusted to judge for himself; I say every man that can judge at all, (as for others, they are to be saved as it pleaseth God) but others that can judge at all must either choose their guides, who shall judge for them, (and then they oftentimes do the wisest, and always save themselves a labour, but then they choose too) or if they be persons of greater understanding, then they are to choose for themselves in particular, what the others do in general,

and by choosing their guide ; and for this, any man may be better trusted for himself, than any man can be for another : for in this case his own interest his most concerned ; and ability is not so necessary as honesty, which certainly every man will best preserve in his own case, and to himself, (and if he does not, it is he that must smart for it,) and it is not required of us not to be in error, but that we endeavour to avoid it.

2. He that follows his guide so far as his reason goes along with him, or which is all one, he that follows his own reason (not guided only by natural arguments, but by divine revelation, and all other good means) hath great advantages over him that gives himself wholly to follow any human guide whatsoever, because he follows all their reasons and his own too ; he follows them till reason leaves them, or till it seems so to him, which is all one to his particular, for by the confession of all sides, an erroneous conscience binds him, when a right guide does not bind him. But he that gives himself up wholly to a guide is oftentimes (I mean, if he be a discerning person) forced to do violence to his own understanding, and to lose all the benefit of his own discretion, that he may reconcile his reason to his guide. And of this we see infinite inconveniencies in the church of Rome ; for we find persons of great understanding, oftentimes so amused with the authority of their church, that it is pity to see them sweat in answering some objections, which they know not how to do, but yet believe they must, because the church hath said it. So that if they read, study, pray, search records, and use all the means of art and industry in the pursuit of truth, it is not with a resolution to follow that which shall seem truth to them, but to con-

firm what before they did believe; and if any argument shall seem unanswerable against any article of their church, they are to take it for a temptation, not for an illumination, and they are to use it accordingly; which makes them make the devil to be the author of that, which God's Spirit hath assisted them to find in the use of lawful means and the search of truth. And when the devil of falshood is like to be cast out by God's Spirit, they say that it is through Belzebub; which was one of the worst things that ever the Pharisees said or did; and was it not a plain stifling of the just and reasonable demands made by the emperor, the kings of France and Spain, and by the ablest divines among them, which was used in the council of Trent, when they demanded the restitution of priests to their liberty of marriage, the use of the chalice, the service in the vulgar tongue, and these things not only in pursuance of truth, but for other great and good ends, even to take away an infinite scandal and a great schism? And yet when they themselves did profess it, and all the world knew these reasonable demands were denied merely upon a politic consideration, yet that these things should be framed into articles, and decrees of faith, and they for ever after bound not only to desire the same things, but to think the contrary to be divine truths; never was reason made more a slave or more useless. Must not all the world say, either they must be great hypocrites, or do great violence to their understanding, when they not only cease from their claim, but must also believe it to be unjust? If the use of their reason had not been restrained by the tyranny and imperiousness of their guide, what the emperor, and the kings,

and their theologians would have done, they can best judge who consider the reasonableness of the demand, and the unreasonableness of the denial. But we see many wise men who with their *optandum esset ut ecclesia licentiam claret*, &c. proclaim to all the world, that in some things they consent and do not consent, and do not heartily believe what they are bound publicly to profess; and they themselves would clearly see a difference, if a contrary decree should be framed by the church; they would with an infinite greater confidence rest themselves in other propositions than what they must believe as the case now stands, and they would find that the authority of a church is a prejudice, as often as a free and modest use of reason is a temptation.

3. God will have no man pressed with another's inconveniencies in matters spiritual and intellectual, no man's salvation to depend upon another, and every tooth that eats sour grapes shall be set on edge for itself, and for none else: and this is remarkable in that saying of God by the Prophet, * *If the Prophet ceases to tell my people of their sins, and leads them into error, the people shall die in their sins, and the blood of them I will require at the hands of that Prophet;* meaning, that God hath so set the prophets to guide us, that we also are to follow them by a voluntary assent by an act of choice and election. For although accidentally and occasionally the sheep may perish by the shepherd's fault, yet that which hath the chiefest influence upon their final condition, is their own act and election, and therefore God hath so appointed guides to us, that if we perish,

* Ezek. 33.

it may be accounted upon both our scores, upon our own and the guides' too, which says plainly, that although we are intrusted to our guides, yet we are intrusted to ourselves too. Our guides must direct us, and yet if they fail, God hath not so left us to them, but he hath given us enough to ourselves to discover their failings, and our own duties in all things necessary. And for other things we must do as well as we can. ^P But it is best to follow our guides, if we know nothing better; but if we do, it is better to follow the pillar of fire, than a pillar of cloud, though both possibly may lead to Canaan: but then also it is possible that it may be otherwise. But I am sure if I do my own best, then if it be best to follow a guide, and if it be also necessary, I shall be sure by God's grace and my own endeavour, to get to it; but if I, without the particular engagement of my own understanding, follow a guide, possibly I may be guilty of extreme negligence, or I may extinguish God's Spirit, or do violence to my own reason. And whether intrusting myself wholly with another, be not a laying up my talent in a napkin, I am not so well assured. I am certain the other is not. And since another man's answering for me will not hinder, but that I also shall answer for myself; as it concerns him to see he does not wilfully misguide me, so it concerns me to see that he shall not if I can help it; if I cannot, it will not be required at my hands: whether it be his fault, or his invincible error, I shall be charged with neither.

4 This is no other than what is enjoined as a duty. For since God will be justified with a free obedience, and there is an obedience of understanding as well as of will and affection, it is of

great concernment, as to be willing to believe whatever God says, so also to inquire diligently whether the will of God be so as is pretended.* Even our acts of understanding are acts of choice, and therefore it is commanded as a duty, to “*Search the Scriptures, to try the spirits whether they be of God or no, of ourselves to be able to judge what is right, to try all things, and to retain that which is best.*” For he that resolves not to consider, resolves not to be careful whether he have truth or no, and therefore hath an affection indifferent to truth or falsehood, which is all one as if he did choose amiss; and since when things are truly propounded and made reasonable and intelligible we cannot but assent, and then it is no thanks to us; we have no way to give our wills to God in matters of belief, but by our industry in searching it and examining the grounds upon which the propounders build their dictates. And the not doing it is oftentimes a cause that God gives a man over *εἰς νῦν ἀδοκίμον*, into a reprobate and undiscerning mind and understanding.

¶ 5. And this very thing, (though men will not understand it) is the perpetual practice of all men in the world that can give a reasonable account of their faith. The very Catholic church itself is *rationabilis et ubique diffusa*,† saith Optatus, “reasonable, as well as diffused, every where.” For take the proselytes of the church of Rome, even in their greatest submission of understanding, they seem to themselves to follow their reason most of all. For if you tell them, Scripture and tradition

* Mat. xv. 10. Joh. v. 40. 1 Joh. iv. 1. Ephes. v. 17. Luk. xxiv. 25. Rom. iii. 11. and i. 28. Apoc. ii. 2. Act. xvii. 11.

† Lib. 3.

are their rules to follow, they will believe you when they know a reason for it, and if they take you upon your word, they have a reason for that too, either they believe you a learned man, or a good man, or that you can have no ends upon them, or something that is of an equal height to fit their understandings. If you tell them they must believe the church, you must tell them why they are bound to it, and if you quote Scripture to prove it, you must give them leave to judge, whether the words alledged speak your sense or no, and therefore to dissent if they say no such thing. And although all men are not wise, and proceed discreetly, yet all make their choice some way or other. He that chooses to please his fancy, takes his choice as much, as he that chooses prudently. And no man speaks more unreasonably, than he that denies to men the use of their reason in choice of their religion. For that I may by the way remove the common prejudice, reason and authority are not things incompetent or repugnant, especially when the authority is infallible and supreme; for there is no greater reason in the world than to believe such an authority. ¶ But then we must consider, whether every authority that pretends to be such, is so indeed. And therefore, *Deus dixit, ergo hoc verum est*, "God hath said it, therefore it is true," is the greatest demonstration in the world for things of this nature. But it is not so in human dictates, and yet reason and human authority are not enemies. For it is a good argument for us to follow such an opinion, because it is made sacred by the authority of councils and ecclesiastical tradition, and sometimes it is the best reason we have in a question, and then it is to be strictly

followed ; but there may also be at other times a reason greater than it that speaks against it, and then the authority must not carry it. But then the difference is not between reason and authority, but between this reason and that, which is greater ; for authority is a very good reason, and is to prevail, unless a stronger comes and disarms it, but then it must give place. So that in this question by Reason I do not mean a distinct topic, but a transcendent that runs through all topics ; for reason, like logic, is instrument of all things else, and when revelation, and philosophy, and public experience, and all other grounds of probability or demonstration have supplied us with matter, then reason does but make use of them ; that is, in plain terms, there being so many ways of arguing, so many sects, such differing interests, such variety of authority, so many pretences, and so many false beliefs, it concerns every wise man to consider which is the best argument, which proposition relies upon the truest grounds ; and if this were not his only way, why do men dispute and urge arguments, why do they cite councils and fathers, why do they alledge Scripture and tradition, and all this on all sides, and to contrary purposes ? If we must judge, then we must use our reason ; if we must not judge, why do they produce evidence ? Let them leave disputing and decree propositions magisterially, but then we may choose whether we will believe them or no ; or if they say we must believe them, they must prove it, and tell us why. And all these disputes concerning tradition, councils, fathers, &c. are not arguments against or besides reason, but contestations and pretences to the best arguments, and the most certain satisfaction of our reason.

But then all these coming into question, submit themselves to reason, that is, to be judged by human understanding, upon the best grounds and information it can receive. So that Scripture, tradition, councils, and fathers, are the evidence in a question, but reason is the judge; that is, we being the persons that are to be persuaded, we must see that we be persuaded reasonably, and it is unreasonable to assent to a lesser evidence, when a greater and clearer is propounded, but of that every man for himself is to take cognizance if he be able to judge, if he be not, he is not bound under the tie of necessity to know any thing of it; that that is necessary shall be certainly conveyed to him, God that best can, will certainly take care for that; for if he does not, it becomes to be not necessary; or if it should still remain necessary, and he be damned for not knowing it, and yet to know it be not in his power, then who can help it? There can be no further care in this business. In other things, there being no absolute and prime necessity, we are left to our Liberty to judge that way that makes best demonstration of our piety and of our love to God and truth, not that way that is always the best argument of an excellent understanding, for this may be a blessing, but the other only is a duty.

And now that we are pitched upon that way which is most natural and reasonable in determination of ourselves rather than of questions, which are often indeterminable, since right Reason proceeding upon the best grounds it can, viz. of divine revelation and human authority, and probability is our guide, "in relation to human things," *stando in humanis*; and supposing the assistance of God's Spirit, (which he never denies

them that fail not of their duty in all such things in which he requires truth and certainty) it remains that we consider how it comes to pass that men are so much deceived in the use of their reason, and choice of their religion, and that in this account we distinguish those accidents which make error innocent from those which make it become a heresy.

SECTION XI.

Of some causes of Error in the exercise of Reason which are inculcate in themselves.

FIRST then I consider, that there are a great many inculpable causes of error, which are arguments of human imperfections, not convictions of a sin. And (1.) the variety of human understandings is so great, that what is plain and apparent to one, is difficult and obscure to another; one will observe a consequent from a common principle, and another from thence will conclude the quite contrary. When St. Peter saw the vision of the sheet let down with all sorts of beasts in it, and a voice saying, “Rise Peter, slay and eat,” *surge Petre, macta et manduca*, if he had not by a particular assistance been directed to the meaning of the Holy Ghost, possibly he might have had other apprehensions of the meaning of that vision, for to myself it seems naturally to speak nothing but the abolition of the mosaical rites, and the restitution of us to that part of Christian Liberty which consists in the promiscuous eating of meats; and

yet besides this, there want not some understandings in the world, to whom these words seem to give St. Peter a power to kill heretical princes. Methinks it is a strange understanding that makes such extractions, but Bozius and Baronius did so. But men may understand what they please, especially when they are to expound oracles. It was an argument of some wit, but of singularity of understanding, that happened in the great contestation between the missals of St. Ambrose and St. Gregory. The lot was thrown, and God made to be judge, so as he was tempted to a miracle, to answer a question which themselves might have ended without much trouble. The two missals were laid upon the altar, and the church door shut and sealed. By the morrow mattins they found St. Gregory's missal torn in pieces (saith the story) and thrown about the church, but St. Ambrose's opened and laid upon the altar in a posture of being read. If I had been to judge of the meaning of this miracle, I should have made no scruple to have said it had been the will of God that the missal of St. Ambrose which had been anciently used, and publicly tried and approved of, should still be read in the church, and that of Gregory let alone, it being torn by an angelical hand as an argument of its imperfection, or of the inconvenience of innovation. But yet they judged it otherwise, for by the tearing and scattering about, they thought it was meant, it should be used over all the world, and that of St. Ambrose read only in the church of Millaine. I am more satisfied that the former was the true meaning, than I am of the truth of the story: but we must suppose that. And now there might have been eternal disputings about the meaning of the miracle, and

nothing left to determine, when two fancies are the litigants, and the contestations about probabilities *hinc inde*. And I doubt not this was one cause of so great variety of opinions in the primitive church, when they proved their several opinions which were mysterious questions of Christian theology, by testimonies out of the obscurer prophets, out of the psalms and canticles, as who please to observe their arguments of discourse and actions of council shall perceive they very much used to do. Now although men's understandings be not equal, and that it is fit the best understandings should prevail, yet that will not satisfy the weaker understandings, because all men will not think that another understanding is better than his own, at least not in such a particular, in which with fancy he hath pleased himself. But commonly they that are least able, are most bold, and the more ignorant is the more confident, therefore it is but reason if he would have another bear with him, he also should bear with another, and if he will not be prescribed to, neither let him prescribe to others. And there is the more reason in this, because such modesty is commonly to be desired of the more imperfect; for wise men know the ground of their persuasion, and have their confidence proportionable to their evidence, others have not, but over-act their trifles: and therefore I said it is but a reasonable demand, that they that have the least reason should not be most imperious; and for others it being reasonable enough, for all their great advantages upon other men, they will be soon persuaded to it; for although wise men might be bolder, in respect of the persons of others less discerning, yet they know there are but few things so certain as to

create much boldness and confidence of assertion, if they do not, they are not the men I take them for.

2. When an action or opinion is commenced with zeal and piety against a known vice or a vicious person, commonly all the mistakes of its proceeding are made sacred by the holiness of the principle, and so abuses the persuasions of good people, that they make it as a characteristic note to distinguish good persons from bad; and then whatever error is consecrated by this means, is therefore made the more lasting, because it is accounted holy, and the persons are not easily accounted heretics, because they erred upon a pious principle. There is a memorable instance in one of the greatest questions of Christendom, viz. concerning images. For when Philippicus had espied the images of the six first synods upon the front of a church, he caused them to be pulled down; now he did it in hatred of the sixth synod: for he being a Monothelite, stood condemned by that synod. The Catholics that were zealous for the sixth synod, caused the images and representations to be put up again, and then sprung the question concerning the lawfulness of images in churches; Philippicus* and his party strived by suppressing images to do disparagement to the sixth synod: the Catholics, to preserve the honour of the sixth synod, would uphold images. And then the question came to be changed, and they who were easy enough to be persuaded to pull down images, were over-awed by a prejudice against the Monothelites, and the Monothelites strived to maintain the advantage they had got by

* Vid. Paulum Diaconum.

a just and pious pretence against images. The Monothelites would have secured their error by the advantage and consociation of a truth, and the other would rather defend a dubious and disputable error, than lose and let go a certain truth. And thus the case stood, and the successors of both parts were led invincibly. For when the heresy of the Monothelites disbanded, (which it did in a while after) yet the opinion of the Iconoclasts, and the question of images grew stronger. Yet since the Iconoclasts at the first were heretics, not for their breaking images, but for denying the two wills of Christ, his divine and his human: that they were called Iconoclasts was to distinguish their opinion in the question concerning the images, but that then Iconoclasts so easily had the reputation of heretics, was because of the other opinion which was conjunct in their persons; which opinion men afterwards did not easily distinguish in them, but took them for heretics in gross, and whatsoever they held to be heretical. And thus upon this prejudice grew great advantages to the veneration of images, and the persons at first were much to be excused, because they were misguided by that which might have abused the best men. And if Epiphanius, who was as zealous against images in churches as Philippicus or Leo Isaurus, had but begun a public contestation, and engaged Emperors to have made decrees against them, Christendom would have had other apprehensions of it, than they had when the Monothelites began it. For few men will endure a truth from the mouth of the devil, and if the person be suspected, so are his ways too. And it is a great subtlety of the devil so to temper truth and falsehood in the same person, that truth may

lose much of its reputation by its mixture with error, and the error may become more plausible by reason of its conjunction with truth. And this we see by too much experience, for we see many truths are blasted in their reputation, because persons whom we think we hate upon just grounds of religion, have taught them. And it was plain enough in the case of Maldonat,* that said of an explication of a place of Scripture, that it was most agreeable to antiquity, but because Calvin had so expounded it, he therefore chose a new one. This was malice. But when a prejudice works tacitly, undiscernably, and irresistibly of the person so wrought upon, the man is to be pitied, not condemned, though possibly his opinion deserves it highly. And therefore it hath been usual to discredit doctrines by the personal failings of them that preach them; or with the disreputation of that sect that maintains them in conjunction with other perverse doctrines. Faustus the Manichee in St. Austin,† glories much, that in their religion God was worshipped purely and without images. St. Austin‡ liked it well, for so it was in his too, but from hence Sanders concludes, that to pull down images in churches was the heresy of the Manichees. The Jews endure no images, therefore Bellarmine§ makes it to be a piece of judaism to oppose them. He might as well have concluded against saying our prayers and church music, that it is judaical, because the Jews used it. And he would be loth to be served so himself, for he that had a mind to use such

* In cap. 6. Johan.

† L. 20. c. 3. cont. Faustum Man.

‡ L. 1. c. ult. de Imagin.

§ De reliq. SS. l. 2. c. 6. Sect. Nicolaus.

arguments, might with much better probability conclude against their sacrament of extreme unction, because when the miraculous healing was ceased, then they were not Catholics but heretics that did transfer it to the use of dying persons, (says Irenæus ;*) for so did the Valentinians : and indeed this argument is something better than I thought for at first, because it was in Irenæus' time reckoned among the heresies. But there are a sort of men that are even with them, and hate some good things which the church of Rome teaches, because she who teaches so many errors, hath been the publisher, and is the practiser of those things. I confess the thing is always unreasonable, but sometimes it is invincible and innocent ; and then may serve to abate the fury of all such decretory sentences, as condemn all the world but their own disciples.

3. There are some opinions that have gone hand in hand with a blessing, and a prosperous profession ; and the good success of their defenders hath amused many good people, because they thought they heard God's voice where they saw God's hand, and therefore have rushed upon such opinions with great piety and as great mistaking. For where they once had entertained a fear of God, and apprehension of his so sensible declaration, such a fear produces scruple, and a scrupulous conscience is always to be pitied, because though it is seldom wise, it is always pious. And this very thing hath prevailed so far upon the understandings even of wise men, that Bellarmine makes it a note of the true church. Which opinion, when it prevails, is a ready way to

* L. l. c. 8. adv. hæc.

make, that instead of martyrs, all men should prove heretics or apostates in persecution; for since men in misery are very suspicious, out of strong desires to find out the cause, that by removing it they may be relieved, they apprehend that to be it that is first presented to their fears; and then if ever truth be afflicted, she shall also be destroyed. I will say nothing in defiance of this fancy, although all the experience in the world says it is false, and that of all men, Christians should least believe it to be true, to whom a perpetual cross is their certain expectation, (and the argument is like the moon, for which no garment can be fit, it alters according to the success of human affairs, and in one age will serve a papist, and in another a protestant) yet when such an opinion does prevail upon timorous persons, the malignity of their error (if any be consequent to this fancy, and taken up upon the reputation of a prosperous heresy) is not to be considered simply and nakedly, but abatement is to be made in a just proportion to that fear, and to that apprehension.

4. Education is so great and so invincible a prejudice, that he who masters the inconvenience of it, is more to be commended than he can justly be blamed that complies with it. For men do not always call them principles which are the prime fountains of reason, from whence such consequents naturally flow, as are to guide the actions and discourses of men; but they are principles which they are first taught, which they sucked in next to their milk, and by a proportion to those first principles, they usually take their estimate of propositions. For whatsoever is taught to them at first they believe infinitely, for they know nothing to

the contrary, they have had no other masters whose theorems might abate the strength of their first persuasions, and it is a great advantage in those cases to get possession ; and before their first principles can be dislodged, they are made habitual and complexional, it is in their nature then to believe them, and this is helped forward very much by the advantage of love and veneration which we have to the first parents of our persuasions. And we see it in the orders of regulars in the church of Rome. That opinion which was the opinion of their patron or founder, or of some eminent personage of the institute, is enough to engage all the order to be of that opinion ; and it is strange that all the Dominicans should be of one opinion in the matter of pre-determination and immaculate conception, and all the Franciscans of the quite contrary, as if their understandings were formed in a different mould, and furnished with various principles by their very rule. Now this prejudice works by many principles, but how strongly they do possess the understanding is visible in that great instance of the affection and perfect persuasion the weaker sort of people have to that which they call the religion of their forefathers.* You may as well charm a fever asleep with the noise of bells, as make any pretence of reason against that religion which old men have entailed upon their heirs male so many generations till they can prescribe. And the Apostles found this to be most true in the extremest difficulty they met with, to contest against the rites

* *Optima rati ea quæ magno assensu, recepta sunt, quorumquæ ; exempla multa sunt, nec ad rationem, sed ad similitudinem vivimus. Sen. Vid. Minut. Fel. octav.*

of Moses, and the long superstition of the Gentiles, which they therefore thought fit to be retained, because they had done so formerly, "proceeding as things were or had been, not as they were to be,"* and all the blessings of this life which God gave them, they had in conjunction with their religion, and therefore they believed it was for their religion, and this persuasion was bound fast in them with ribs of iron; the Apostles were forced to unloose the whole conjuncture of parts and principles in their understandings, before they could make them malleable and receptive of any impresses. But the observation and experience of all wise men can justify this truth. All that I shall say to the present purpose, is this, that consideration is to be had to the weakness of persons when they are prevailed upon by so innocent a prejudice, and when there cannot be arguments strong enough to overcome an habitual persuasion bred with a man, nourished up with him, that always eat at his table, and lay in his bosom, he is not easily to be called heretic, for if he keeps the foundation of faith, other articles are not so clearly demonstrated on either side, but that a man may innocently be abused to the contrary. And therefore in this case to handle him charitably, is but to do him justice: and when an opinion "in articles of inferior moment," *in minoribus articulis*, is entertained upon the title and stock of education, it may be the better permitted to him, since upon no better stock nor stronger arguments, most men entertain their whole religion, even Christianity itself.

* *Pergentes non quo eundum est, sed quo itur.*

5. There are some persons of a differing persuasion, who therefore are the rather to be tolerated, because the indirect practices and impostures of their adversaries have confirmed them, that those opinions which they disavow, are not from God, as being upheld by means not of God's appointment : for it is no unreasonable discourse to say, that God will not be served with a lie, for he does not need one, and he hath means enough to support all those truths which he hath commanded, and hath supplied every honest cause with enough for its maintenance, and to contest against its adversaries. And (but that they which use indirect arts will not be willing to lose any of their unjust advantages, nor yet be charitable to those persons, whom either to gain or to undo, they leave nothing unattempted) the church of Rome hath much reason not to be so decretory in her sentences against persons of a differing persuasion, for if their cause were entirely the cause of God, they have given wise people reason to suspect it, because some of them have gone to the devil to defend it. And if it be remembered what tragedies were stirred up against Luther, for saying, the devil had taught him an argument against the mass, it will be of as great advantage against them, that they go to the devil for many arguments to support not only the mass, but the other distinguishing articles of their church : I instance in the notorious forging of miracles, and framing of false and ridiculous legends. For the former, I need no other instances than what happened in the great contestation about the immaculate conception, when there were miracles brought on both sides to prove the contradictory parts ; and though it be more than probable that both sides

played the jugglers, yet the Dominicans had the ill luck to be discovered, and the actors burned at Berne. But this discovery happened by providence; for the Dominican opinion hath more degrees of probability than the Franciscan; is clearly more consonant both to Scripture and all antiquity, and this part of it is acknowledged by the greatest patrons themselves, as Salmeron, Posa, and Wadding, yet because they played the knaves in a just question, and used false arts to maintain a true proposition, God Almighty to shew that he will not be served by a lie, was pleased rather to discover the imposture in the right opinion than in the false; since nothing is more dishonourable to God, than to offer a sin in sacrifice to him, and nothing more incongruous in the nature of the thing, then that truth and falsehood should support each other, or that true doctrine should live at the charges of a lie. And he that considers the arguments for each opinion, will easily conclude, that if God would not have truth confirmed by a lie, much less would he himself attest a lie with a true miracle. And by this ground it will easily follow, that the Franciscan party, although they had better luck than the Dominicans, yet had not more honesty, because their cause was worse, and therefore their arguments no whit the better. And although the argument drawn from miracles is good to attest a holy doctrine, which by its own worth will support itself, after way is a little made by miracles, yet of itself and by its own reputation it will not support any fabric; for instead of proving a doctrine to be true, it makes that the miracles themselves are suspected to be illusions, if they be pretended in behalf of a

doctrine, which we think we have reason to account false. And therefore the Jews did not believe Christ's doctrine for his miracles, but disbelieved the truth of his miracles, because they did not like his doctrine. And if the holiness of his doctrine, and the Spirit of God by inspirations and infusions, and by that which St. Peter calls *a surer word of Prophecy*, had not attested the divinity both of his person and his office, we should have wanted many degrees of confidence which now we have upon the truth of Christian religion. But now since we are foretold by this *surer word of Prophecy*, that is, the prediction of Jesus Christ,* that antichrist should come in all wonders, and signs, and lying miracles, and that the church saw much of that already verified in Simon Magus, Apollonius Tyaneus, and Manetho, and divers heretics,† it is now come to that pass, that the argument in its best advantage proves nothing so much as that the doctrine which it pretends to prove, is to be suspected, because it was foretold that false doctrine should be obtruded under such pretences. But then, when not only true miracles are an insufficient argument to prove a truth since the establishment of Christianity, but that the miracles themselves are false and spurious, it makes that doctrine in whose defence they come, justly to be suspected, because they are a demonstration that the interested persons use all means, leave nothing unattempted to prove their propositions; but since they so fail, as to bring nothing from God, but something from the

* Vid. Baron. *Æ. D.* 68. n. 22. Philostrate. l. 4. T. 485. compend. Cedren. p. 202.

† Stapleton. prompt. Moral. pars æstiva, p. 627.

devil for its justification, it is a great sign that the doctrine is false, because we know the devil, unless it be against his will, does nothing to prove a true proposition that makes against him. And now then, those persons who will endure no man of another opinion, might do well to remember how by their exorcisms, their devil's tricks at Lowdon, and the other side pretending to cure mad folks and persons bewitched, and the many discoveries of their juggling, they have given so much reason to their adversaries to suspect their doctrine, that either they must not be ready to condemn their persons who are made suspicious by their indirect proceeding in attestation of that which they value so high as to call their religion, or else they must condemn themselves for making the scandal active and effectual.

As for false legends, it will be of the same consideration, because they are false testimonies of miracles that were never done, which differs only from the other, as a lie in words from a lie in action; but of this we have witness enough in that decree of pope Leo X. session the eleventh, of the last Lateran council, where he excommunicates all the forgers and inventors of visions and false miracles, which is a testimony that it was then a practice so public as to need a law for its suppression; and if any man shall doubt whether it were so or not, let him see the *centum gravamina* of the princes of Germany where it is highly complained of. But the extreme stupidity and sottishness of the inventors of lying stories is so great, as to give occasion to some persons to suspect the truth of all church story, "What is true and what is false is equally suspected;"* witness the legend of Lom-

* Isid. Pelus.

bardy: of the author of which, the bishop of the Canaries gives this testimony, "You will much oftener read in his book, monstrous prodigies than real miracles: an impudent and stupid fellow and far enough from being serious and judicious."* But I need not descend so low, for saint Gregory and V. Bede themselves reported miracles,† for the authority of which they only had the report of the common people, and it is not certain that St. Jerome had so much in his stories of St. Paul and St. Anthony,‡ and the Fauns and Satyrs which appeared to them, and desired their prayers. But I shall only by way of eminency, note what Sir Thomas More says in his epistle to Ruthal the king's secretary, before the dialogue of Lucian Philopseudes, that therefore he undertook the translation of that dialogue, to free the world from a superstition that crept in under the face and title of religion. For such lies, says he, are transmitted to us with such authority, that a certain impostor had persuaded St. Austin, that the very fable which Lucian scoffs, and makes sport withal in that dialogue, was a real story, and acted in his own days. "Of the two persons, the one of which departed, the other returned to life at the end of twenty days, which Lucian ridicules under different names."§ The epistle is worth the reading to this purpose; but he says this abuse grew to such a height, that scarce any life of any saint or martyr is truly related, but is full of lies

* In illo enim libro miraculorum monstra sæpius quam veræ miracula legas. Hanc homo scripsit ferrei oris, plumbei cordis, animi certe parum severi et prudentis.

† Vid L. II. loc. Theol. cap. 6.

‡ Canus ibid.

§ Viz. De duobus spurinis, altero decedente altero in vitam redeunte post viginti dies; quam in aliis nominibus ridet Lucianus. Vide etiam argumentum Gilberti Cognati, in annotat in hunc dialog.

and lying wonders, and some persons thought they served God if they did honour to God's saints, by inventing some prodigious story or miracle for their reputation. So that now it is no wonder if the most pious men are apt to believe, and the greatest historians are easy enough to report such stories, which serving to a good end, are also consigned by the report of persons, otherwise pious and prudent enough. I will not instance in Vincentius his *Speculum, Turonensis*, Thomas Cantipratanus, John Herolt, *Vitæ Patrum*,* nor the revelations of saint Bridget, though confirmed by two popes, Martin V. and Boniface IX. even the best and most deliberate amongst them, Lippoman, Surius, Lipsius Bzovius, and Baronius are so full of fables, that they cause great disreputation to the other monuments and records of antiquity, and yet do no advantage to the cause under which they serve and take pay. They do no good and much hurt; but yet accidentally they may procure this advantage to charity, since they do none to faith; that since they have so abused the credit of story that our confidences want much of that support we should receive from her records of antiquity, yet the men that dissent and are scandalized by such proceedings should be excused if they should chance to be afraid of truth that hath put on garments of imposture: and since much violence is done to the *truth and certainty* of their judging, let none be done to their *liberty* of judging: since they cannot meet a right guide, let them have a charitable judge. And since it is one very great argument against Simon Magus and against Mahomet, that we can prove their

* Vid Palæot. de sacra sindone, part. 1. Epist. ad Lector.

miracles to be impostures, it is much to be pitied if timorous and suspicious persons shall invincibly and honestly less apprehend a truth which they see conveyed by such a testimony, which we all use as an argument to reprove the Mahometan superstition.

6. Here also comes in all the weaknesses and trifling prejudices which operate not by their own strength, but by advantage taken from the weakness of some understandings. Some men by a proverb or a common saying are determined to the belief of a proposition, for which they have no argument better than such a proverbial sentence. And when divers of the common people in Jerusalem were ready to yield their understandings to the belief of the Messias, they were turned clearly from their apprehensions by that proverb, "*Look and see, does any good thing come from Galilee?*" And this, *when Christ comes, no man knows from whence he is*; but this man was known of what parents; of what city. And thus the weakness of their understanding was abused, and that made the argument too hard for them. And the whole seventh chapter of Saint John's gospel is a perpetual instance of the efficacy of such trifling prejudices, and the vanity and weakness of popular understandings. Some whole ages have been abused by a definition, which being once received, as most commonly they are upon slight grounds, they are taken for certainties in any science respectively, and for principles, and upon their reputation men use to frame conclusions, which must be false or uncertain according as the definitions are. And he that hath observed any thing of the weaknesses of men, and the successions of groundless doctrines from age to age,

and how seldom definitions which are put into systems, or that derive from the fathers, or approved among school-men, are examined by persons of the same interests, will bear me witness, how many and great inconveniencies press hard upon the persuasions of men, who are abused, and yet never consider who hurt them. Others, and they very many, are led by authority or examples of princes and great personages, "Have any of the rulers believed on him?"* Some by the reputation of one learned man, are carried into any persuasion whatsoever. And in the middle and latter ages of the church, this was the more considerable, because the infinite ignorance of the clerks and the men of the long robe, gave them over to be led by those few guides which were marked to them by an eminency, much more than their ordinary: which also did the more amuse them, because most commonly they were fit for nothing but to admire what they understood not; their learning then was in some skill in the Master of the Sentences, in Aquinas or Scotus whom they admired next to the most intelligent order of Angels; hence came opinions that made sects and division of names, Thomists, Scotists, Albertists, Nominals, Reals, and I know not what monsters of names; and whole families of the same opinion; the whole institute of an order being engaged to believe according to the opinion of some leading man of the same order, as if such an opinion were imposed upon them, "As a proof of holy obedience," *in virtute sanctæ obedientiæ*. But this inconvenience is greater when the principle of the mistake runs higher,

* Joh. 7.

when the opinion is derived from a primitive man and a saint, for then it often happens that what at first was but a plain innocent seduction, comes to be made sacred by the veneration which is consequent to the person for having lived long ago; and then, because the person is also since canonized, the error is almost made eternal, and the cure desperate. These and the like prejudices, which are as various as the miseries of humanity, or the variety of human understandings, are not absolute excuses, unless to some persons; but truly if they be to any, they are exemptions to all, from being pressed with too peremptory a sentence against them, especially if we consider what leave is given to all men by the church of Rome to follow any one probable doctor in an opinion which is contested against by many more. And as for the doctors of the other side, they being destitute of any pretences to an infallible *medium* to determine questions, must of necessity allow the same Liberty to the people, to be as prudent as they can in the choice of a fallible guide; and when they have chosen, if they do follow him into error, the matter is not so inexpiable for being deceived in using the best guides we had, which guides, because themselves were abused, did also against their wills deceive me. So that this prejudice may the easier abuse us, because it is almost like a duty to follow the dictates of a probable doctor, or if it be over-acted or accidentally pass into an inconvenience, it is therefore to be excused because the principle was not ill, unless we judge by our event, not by the antecedent probability. Of such men as these it was said by Saint Austin, "The common sort of people are safe in their not inquiring by their

own industry, and in the simplicity of their understanding relying upon the best guides they can get.”*

But this is of such a nature in which, as we may inculpably be deceived, so we may turn it into a vice or a design, and then the consequent errors will alter the property, and become heresies. There are some men that have men’s persons in admiration because of advantage, and some that have itching ears, and heap up teachers to themselves. In these and the like cases, the authority of a person, and the prejudices of a great reputation is not the excuse but the fault: and a sin is so far from excusing an error, that error becomes a sin by reason of its relation to that sin as to its parent and principle.

SECTION XII.

Of the innocency of Error in opinion in a pious person.

AND therefore as there are so many innocent causes of Error; as there are weaknesses within, and harmless and unavoidable prejudices from without, so if ever error be procured by a vice it hath no excuse, but becomes such a crime, of so much malignity, as to have influence upon the effect and consequent, and by communication makes it become criminal. The Apostles noted

* Cæteram turbam non intelligendi vivacitas, sed credendi simplicitas tutissimam facit. Contr. Fund. c. 4. And Gregory Nazienzen, σωζει πολλakis τὸν λαόν τὸ ἀβασάνιστον. Orat. 21,

two such causes, *covetousness and ambition*: the former in them of the circumcision, and the latter in Diotrephes and Simon Magus; and there were some that were, “under the influence of various lusts,” ἀγομενοι ἐπιθυμίαις ποικίλαις, they were of the long robe too, but they were the she-disciples, upon whose consciences some false Apostles had influence by advantage of their wantonness, and thus the three principles of all sin become also the principles of heresy, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. And in pursuance of these arts the devil hath not wanted fuel to set to work incendiaries in all ages of the church. The bishops were always honourable, and most commonly had great revenues, and a bishopric would satisfy the two designs of covetousness and ambition, and this hath been the golden apple very often contended for, and very often the cause of great fires in the church. “Thebulis created disturbances in the church because he could not obtain the bishopric of Jerusalem,”* said Egesippus in Eusebius. Tertullian turned Montanist in discontent for missing the bishopric of Carthage after Aggrippinus, and so did Montanus himself for the same discontent, saith Nicephorus. Novatus would have been bishop of Rome, Donatus of Carthage, Arius of Alexandria, Aërius of Sebastia, but they all missed, and therefore all of them vexed Christendom. And this was so common a thing, that oftentimes, the threatening the church with a schism, or a heresy, was a design to get a bishopric: and Socrates reports of Asterius, that he did frequent the conventicles of the Arians;

* Thebulis quia rejectus ab Episcopatu Hierosolymitano, turbare cœpit Ecclesiam.

“ For he was aiming at some bishopric,” *Nam episcopatum aliquem ambiebat.* And setting aside the infirmities of men, and their innocent prejudices; Epiphanius makes pride to be the only cause of heresies, “ Pride and prejudice,” ὑβρις καὶ πρόκρισις, cause them all, the one criminally, the other innocently. And indeed St. Paul does almost make pride the only cause of heresies; his words cannot be expounded, unless it be at least the principal, “ He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, 1 Tim. vi. 3. 4.*

The sum is this, if ever an opinion be begun with pride, or managed with impiety, or ends in a crime; the man turns heretic: but let the error be never so great, so it be not against an article of creed, if it be simple and hath no confederation with the personal iniquity of the man, the opinion is as innocent as the person, though perhaps as false as he is ignorant, and therefore shall burn though he himself escape. But in these cases, and many more, (for the causes of deception increase by all accidents, and weaknesses and illusions) no man can give certain judgment upon the persons of men in particular, unless the matter of fact and crime be accident and notorious. The man cannot by human judgment be concluded a heretic, unless his opinion be an open recession from plain demonstrative divine authority, (which must needs be notorious, voluntary, vincible and criminal) or

* εἰ τις ἑτεροδιδασκαλεῖ, and consents not to sound words, and the doctrine that is according to godliness, τεύφεται μηδὲν ἐπιστάμενος, ἀλλὰ νοσῶν περὶ ζητήσεως καὶ λογομαχίας, ἐξ ὧν γίνεται φθόνος, ἔρις, βλασφημίαι, ὑπόνοιαι πανηραί.

that there be a palpable serving of an end accidental and extrinsical to the opinion.

But this latter is very hard to be discerned, because those accidental and adherent crimes which makes the man a heretic, in questions not simply fundamental or of necessary practice, are actions so internal and spiritual, that cognizance can but seldom be taken of them. And therefore to instance, though the opinion of purgatory be false, yet to believe it cannot be heresy, if a man be abused into the belief of it invincibly, because it is not a doctrine either fundamentally false or practically impious, it neither proceeds from the will, nor hath any immediate or direct influence upon choice and manners. And as for those other ends of upholding that opinion which possibly its patrons may have, as for the reputation of their churches' infallibility, for the advantage of dirges, requiems, masses, monthly minds, anniversaries, and other offices for the dead, which usually are very profitable, rich and easy, these things may possibly have sole influences upon their understanding, but whether they have, or no, God only knows. If the proposition and article were true, these ends might justly be subordinate and consistent with a true proposition. And there are some truths that are also profitable, as the necessity of maintenance to the clergy, the doctrine of restitution, giving alms, lending freely, remitting debts in cases of great necessity: and it would be but an ill argument that the preachers of these doctrines speak false, because possibly in these articles they may serve their own ends. For although Demetrius and the crafts-men were without excuse for resisting the preaching of

St. Paul, because it was notorious they resisted the truth upon ground of profit and personal emoluments, and the matter was confessed by themselves, yet if the clergy should maintain their just rights and revenues, which by pious dedications and donatives were long since ascertained upon them, is it to be presumed in order of law and charity, that this end is in the men subordinate to truth, because it is so in the thing itself, and that therefore no judgment in prejudice of these truths can be made from that observation?

But if "in any other way," *aliunde*, we are ascertained of the truth or falshood of a proposition respectively, yet the judgment of the personal ends of the men cannot ordinarily be certain and judicial; because most commonly the acts are private, and the purposes internal, and temporal ends may sometimes consist with truth, and whether the purposes of the men make these ends principal or subordinate, no man can judge; and be they how they will, yet they do not always prove that when they are conjunct with error, that the error was caused by these purposes and criminal intentions.

But in questions practical, the doctrine itself and the person too, may with more ease be re-proved, because matter of fact being evident, and nothing being so certain as the experiments of human affairs, and these being the immediate consequents of such doctrines, are with some more certainty of observation redargued, than the speculative; whose judgment is of itself more difficult, more remote from matter and human observation, and with less curiosity and explicitness declared in Scripture, as being of less consequence and concernment in order to God's

and man's great end. In other things which end in notion and ineffective contemplation, where neither the doctrine is malicious, nor the person apparently criminal, he is to be left to the judgment of God, and as there is no certainty of human judicature in this case, so it is to no purpose it should be judged. For if the person may be innocent with his error, and there is no rule whereby he can certainly be pronounced, that he is actually criminal; (as it happens in matters speculative.) Since the end of the commandment is love out of *a pure conscience and faith unfeigned*; and the commandment may obtain its end in a consistence with this simple speculative error, "Why should men trouble themselves with such opinions, so as to disturb the public charity or the private confidence?" Opinions and persons are just so to be judged as other matters and persons criminal. For no man can judge any thing else: it must be a crime, and it must be open, so as to take cognizance, and make true human judgment of it. And this is all I am to say concerning the causes of heresies, and of the distinguishing rules for guiding of our judgments towards others.

As for guiding our judgments and the use of our reason in judging for ourselves, all that is to be said is reducible to this one proposition. Since errors are then made sins, when they are contrary to charity, or inconsistent with a good life and the honour of God, that judgment is the truest, or at least that opinion most innocent that 1. best promotes the reputation of God's glory, and 2. is the best instrument of holy life. For in questions and interpretations of dispute, these two analogies are the best to make propositions, and conjectures, and determinations. Diligence and

care in obtaining the best guides, and the most convenient assistances; prayer, and modesty of spirit, simplicity of purposes and intentions, humility and aptness to learn, and a peaceable disposition, are therefore necessary to finding out truths, because they are parts of good life, without which our truths will do us little advantage, and our errors can have no excuse, but with these dispositions as he is sure to find out all that is necessary, so what truth he inculpably misses of, he is sure is therefore not necessary, because he could not find it when he did his best and his most innocent endeavours. (And this I say, to secure the persons; because no rule can antecedently secure the proposition in matters disputable. For even in the proportions and explications of this rule, there is infinite variety of disputes: and when the dispute is concerning free will, one party denies it because he believes it magnifies the grace of God, that it works irresistibly; the other affirms, because he believes it engages us upon greater care and piety of our endeavours. The one opinion thinks God reaps the glory of our good actions, the other thinks it charges our bad actions upon him. So in the question of merit, one part chooses his assertion because he thinks it encourages us to do good works, the other believes it makes us proud, and therefore he rejects it. The first believes it increases piety, the second believes it increases spiritual presumption and vanity. The first thinks it magnifies God's justice, the other thinks it derogates from his mercy. Now then, since neither this nor any ground can secure a man from possibility of mistaking, we were infinitely miserable if it would not secure us from punishment, so long as we willingly consent

not to a crime, and do our best endeavour to avoid an error. Only by the way, let me observe, that since there are such great differences of apprehension concerning the consequents of an article, no man is to be charged with the odious consequences of his opinion. Indeed his doctrine is, but the person is not, if he understands not such things to be consequent to his doctrine; for if he did, and then avows them, they are his direct opinions, and he stands as chargeable with them as with his first propositions; but if he disavows them, he would certainly rather quit his opinion than avow such errors or impieties, which are pretended to be consequent to it, because every man knows that can be no truth, from whence falsehood naturally and immediately does derive, and he therefore believes his first proposition, because he believes it innocent of such errors as are charged upon it directly or consequently.

So that now, since no error, neither for itself nor its consequence, is to be charged as criminal upon a pious person, since no simple error is a sin, nor does condemn us before the throne of God, since he is so pitiful to our crimes, that he pardons many "entirely," *de toto et integro*, in all makes abatement for the violence of temptation, and the surprisal and invasion of our faculties, and therefore much less will demand of us an account for our weaknesses; and since the strongest understanding cannot pretend to such an immunity and exemption from the condition of men, as not to be deceived, and confess its weakness; it remains we enquire what deportment is to be used towards persons of a differing persuasion, when we are (I do not say doubtful of a proposition, but) convinced that he that differs from us is in error, for this

was the first intention, and the last end of this discourse.

SECTION XIII.

Of the deportment to be used towards persons disagreeing, and the reasons why they are not to be punished with death, &c.

FOR although every man may be deceived, yet some are right and may know it too, for every man that may err, does not therefore certainly err, and if he errs because he recedes from his rule, then if he follows it he may do right, and if ever any man upon just grounds did change his opinion, then he was in the right, and was sure of it too, and although confidence is mistaken for a just persuasion many times, yet some men are confident, and have reason so to be. Now when this happens, the question is what deportment they are to use towards persons that disagree from them, and by consequence are in error.

1. Then, no Christian is to be put to death, dismembered, or otherwise directly persecuted for his opinion, which does not teach impiety or blasphemy. If it plainly and apparently brings in a crime, and himself does act it or encourage it, then the matter of fact is punishable according to its proportion or malignity; as if he preaches treason or sedition, his opinion is not his excuse, because it brings in a crime, and a man is nevertheless traitor, because he believes it lawful to commit

treason ; and a man is a murderer if he kills his brother unjustly, although he thinks he does God good service in it. Matters of fact are equally judicable, whether the principle of them be from within or from without : and if a man could pretend to innocence in being seditious, blasphemous, or perjured by persuading himself it is lawful, there were as great a gate opened to all iniquity, as will entertain all the pretences, the designs, the impostures, and disguises of the world. And therefore God hath taken order that all rules concerning matters of fact and good life shall be so clearly explicated, that without the crime of the man, he cannot be ignorant of all his practical duty. And therefore the Apostles and primitive doctors made no scruple of condemning such persons for heretics, that did dogmatize a sin. He that teaches others to sin, is worse than he that commits the crime, whether he be tempted by his own interest, or encouraged by the other's doctrine. It was as bad in Basilides to teach it to be lawful to renounce faith and religion, and take all manner of oaths and covenants in time of persecution, as if himself had done so ; nay it is as much worse, as the mischief is more universal, or as a fountain is greater than a drop of water taken from it. He that writes treason in a book, or preaches sedition in a pulpit, and persuades it to the people, is the greatest traitor and incendiary, and his opinion there is the fountain of a sin, and therefore could not be entertained in his understanding upon weakness, or inculpable or innocent prejudice ; he cannot from Scripture or divine revelation have any pretence to colour that so fairly as to seduce either a wise or an honest man. If it rest there and goes no further, it is not cognizable, and so

scapes that way ; but if it be published, and comes “ from the pen to the sword,” *à stylo ad Machæram* (as Tertullian’s phrase is) then it becomes matter of fact in principle and in persuasion, and is just so punishable, as is the crime that it persuades : such were they of whom St. Paul complains, who brought in damnable doctrines and lusts.* St. Paul’s “ I wish they were even cut off,” *utinam abscindantur*, is just of them, take it in any sense of rigour and severity, so it be proportionable to the crime, or criminal doctrine. Such were those of whom God spake in Deut. 13. If any prophet tempts to idolatry, saying, let us go after other Gods, he shall be slain. But these do not come into this question. But the proposition is to be understood concerning questions disputable in *materia intellectuali*, (“ as matter of opinion,”) which also for all that law of killing, such false prophets were permitted with impunity in the synagogue, as appears beyond exception in the great divisions and disputes between the Pharisees and the Sadduces. I deny not but certain and known idolatry, or any other sort of practical impiety with its principiant doctrine may be punished corporally, because it is no other but matter of fact ; but no matter of mere opinion, no errors that of themselves are not sins, are to be persecuted or punished by death or corporal inflictions. This is now to be proved.

2. All the former discourse is sufficient argument how easy it is for us in such matters to be deceived. So long as the Christian religion was a simple profession of the articles of belief, and a hearty prosecution of the rules of good life, the

* Gal. 5.

fewness of the articles, and the clearness of the rule, was cause of the seldom prevarication. But when divinity is swelled up to so great a body, when the several questions which the peevishness and wantonness of sixteen ages have commenced, are concentrated into one, and from all these questions something is drawn into the body of theology till it hath ascended up to the greatness of a mountain, and the sum of divinity collected by Aquinas, makes a volume as great as was that of Livy mocked at in the epigram,

Quem mea vix totum bibliotheca capit.*

It is impossible for any industry to consider so many particulars in the infinite numbers of questions as are necessary to be considered before we can with certainty determine any. And after all the considerations which we can have in a whole age, we are not sure *not to be deceived*. The obscurity of some questions, the nicety of some articles, the intricacy of some revelations, the variety of human understandings, the windings of logic, the tricks of adversaries, the subtilty of sophisters, the engagement of educations, personal affections, the portentous number of writers, the infinity of authorities, the vastness of some arguments, as consisting in enumeration of many particulars, the uncertainty of others, the several degrees of probability, the difficulties of Scripture, the invalidity of probation of tradition, the opposition of all exterior arguments to each other, and their open contestation, the public violence done to authors and records, the private arts and supplantings, the falsifyings, the indefatigable industry

* "Of which my entire library can scarcely hold the whole."

of some men to abuse all understandings, and all persuasions into their own opinions, these and thousands more, even all the difficulty of things, and all the weaknesses of man and all the arts of the devil, have made it impossible for any man in so great variety of matter not to be deceived. No man pretends to it but the pope, and no man is more deceived than he is in that very particular.

3. From hence proceeds a danger which is consequent to this proceeding, for if we, who are so apt to be deceived, and so insecure in our resolution of questions disputable, should persecute a disagreeing person, we are not sure we do not fight against God, for if his proposition be true and persecuted, then, because all truth derives from God, this proceeding is against God, and therefore this is not to be done upon Gamaliel's ground, lest peradventure we be found to fight against God, of which, because we can have no security (at least) in this case, we have all the guilt of a doubtful or an uncertain conscience. For if there be no security in the thing, as I have largely proved, the conscience in such cases is as uncertain as the question is, and if it be not doubtful where it is uncertain, it is because the man is not wise, but as confident as ignorant, the first without reason, and the second without excuse. And it is very disproportionable for a man to persecute another certainly, for a proposition, that if he were wise, he would know is not certain, at least, the other person may innocently be uncertain of it. If he be killed, he is certainly killed, but if he be called heretic, it is not so certain that he is an heretic. It were good therefore, that proceedings were according to evidence, and the rivers not swell over the banks, nor a certain definitive sentence

of death passed upon such persuasions which cannot certainly be defined. And this argument is of so much the more force, because we see that the greatest persecutions that ever have been, were against truth, even against Christianity itself, and it was a prediction of our blessed Saviour, that persecution should be the lot of true believers: and if we compute the experience of suffering Christendom, and the prediction, that truth should suffer, with those few instances of suffering heretics, it is odds, but persecution is on the wrong side, and that it is error and heresy, that is, cruel and tyrannical, especially since the truth of Jesus Christ, and of his religion are so meek, so charitable, and so merciful: and we may in this case, exactly use the words of St. Paul, *But as then, he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the spirit; even so it is now*: and so it ever will be till Christ's second coming.

4. Whoever persecutes a disagreeing person, arms all the world against himself,* and all pious people of his own persuasion, when the scales of authority return to his adversary, and attest his contradictory; and then, what can he urge for mercy for himself, or his party that sheweth none to others? If he says, that he is to be spared because he believes true, but the other was justly

* "When this is perceived, they will seek our ruin with the greater boldness." Quo comperto illi in nostram perniciem licentiore audacia grassabuntur. St. Aug. epist. ad Donat. Procons. et Contr. ep. Fund. "So now I ought to be so much the more patient with you, as my neighbours manifest a similar feeling towards me, when in your view I err most egregiously." Ita nunc debeo sustinere et tantâ patientiâ vobiscum agere quantâ mecum egerunt proximi mei cum in vestro dogmate rabiosus ac cæcus errarem.

persecuted because he was in error, he is ridiculous. For he is as confidently believed to be a heretic, as he believes his adversary such, and whether he be or no, being the thing in question, of this he is not to be his own judge, but he that hath authority on his side, will be sure to judge against him. So that, what either side can indifferently make use of, it is good that neither would, because neither side can with reason sufficient do it in prejudice of the other. If a man will say, that every man must take his adventure, and if it happens authority to be with him, he will persecute his adversaries, and if it turns against him, he will bear it as well as he can, and hope for a reward of martyrdom, and innocent suffering; besides that this is so equal to be said of all sides, and besides, that this is a way to make an eternal disunion of hearts and charities, and that it will make Christendom nothing but a shambles, and a perpetual butchery, and as fast as men's wits grow wanton, or confident, or proud, or abused, so often there will be new executions and massacres. Besides all this, it is most unreasonable and unjust, as being contrariant to those laws of justice and charity, whereby we are bound with greater zeal to spare and preserve an innocent, than to condemn a guilty person, and there is less malice and iniquity in sparing the guilty, than in condemning the good. Because it is in the power of men to remit a guilty person to divine judicature, and for divers causes, not to use severity, but in no case is it lawful, neither hath God at all given to man a power, to condemn such persons as cannot be proved other than pious and innocent. And therefore it is better, if it should so happen, that we should spare the innocent person, and one that is

actually deceived, than that, upon the turn of the wheel, the true believers should be destroyed.

And this very reason, he that had authority sufficient and absolute to make laws, was pleased to urge as a reasonable inducement for the establishing of that law which he made for the indemnity of erring persons. It was in the parable of the tares mingled with the good seed in "the Lord's field," *agro dominico*, the good seed (Christ himself being the interpreter) are the children of the kingdom, the tares are the children of the wicked one, upon this comes the precept, *gather not the tares by themselves, but let them both grow together till the harvest*, that is, till the day of judgment. This parable hath been tortured infinitely to make it confess its meaning, but we shall soon dispatch it. All the difficulty and variety of exposition is reducible to these two questions, What is meant by *gather not*? and what by *tares*? That is, what kind of sword is forbidden? and what kind of persons are to be tolerated? The former is clear; for the spiritual sword is not forbidden to be used to any sort of criminals, for that would destroy the power of excommunication. The prohibition therefore lies against the use of the temporal sword, in cutting off some persons. Who they are, is the next difficulty. But by *tares*, or the *children of the wicked one*, are meant either persons of ill lives, wicked persons only "in conduct," *in re practica*, or else another kind of evil persons, men criminal or faulty "in understanding," *in re intellectuali*. One or other of these two must be meant; a third I know not. But the former cannot be meant, because it would destroy all bodies politic, which cannot consist without laws, nor laws without a

compulsory and a power of the sword ; therefore, if criminals were to be let alone till the day of judgment, bodies politic must stand or fall “ according to the will and decision of the wicked,” *ad arbitrium impiorum*, and nothing good could be protected, not innocence itself, nothing could be secure but violence and tyranny. It follows then that since a kind of persons who are indeed faulty are to be tolerated, it must be meant of persons faulty in another kind, in which the gospel had not in other places clearly established a power externally compulsory, and therefore since in all actions practically criminal a power of the sword is permitted, here where it is denied must mean a crime of another kind, and by consequence errors intellectual, commonly called heresy.

And after all this, the reason there given, confirms this interpretation,* for therefore it is forbidden to cut off these tares, lest we also pull up the wheat with them, which is the sum of these two last arguments. For because heresy is of so nice consideration, and difficult sentence, in thinking to root up heresies, we may by our mistakes † destroy true doctrine ; which although it be possible to be done in all cases of practical question, by mistake, yet because external actions are more discernable than inward speculations and opinions, innocent persons are not so easily mistaken for the guilty, in actions criminal, as in matters of inward persuasion. And upon that very reason, St. Martin was zealous to have procured a revocation of a

* Vide St. Chrysost. homil. 47. in Cap. 13. Matth. et St. August. Quest. in cap. 13 Mat. St. Cyprian. Ep. lib. 3. Ep. 1. Theophyl. in 13 Matth.

† St. Hieron. in cap. 13. Matth. ait, per hanc parabolam significari, ne in rebus dubiis præceps fiat iudicium.

commission granted to certain tribunes to make enquiry in Spain for sects and opinions; for under colour of rooting out the Priscillianists, there was much mischief done, and more likely to happen to the orthodox. For it happened then, as oftentimes since, "a heretic was sometimes discovered rather by his pallid countenance and his dress than by his creed."* They were no good inquisitors of heretical pravity, so Sulpitius witnesses. But secondly, the reason says, that therefore these persons are so to be permitted as not to be persecuted, lest when a revolution of human affairs sets contrary opinions in the throne or chair, they who were persecuted before, should now themselves become persecutors of others, and so at one time or other, before or after, the wheat be rooted up, and the truth be persecuted. But as these reasons confirm the law, and this sense of it, so abstracting from the law, it is of itself concluding by an argument "from inconvenience," *ab incommodo*, and that founded upon the principles of justice, and right reason, as I formerly alledged.

4. We are not only uncertain of finding out truths in matters disputable, but we are certain that the best and ablest doctors of Christendom, have been actually deceived in matters of great concernment, which thing is evident in all those instances of persons from whose doctrines all sorts of Christians respectively, take Libery to dissent. "They may rage against us, saith St. Augustin, who know nothing of the labor it requires to discover truth, and the difficulty with which error is avoided. They may rage against us, who know

* *Pallore potius et veste quam fide hæreticus dijudicari solebat aliquando per tribunos maximi.*

not how rare and hard it is to vanquish the carnalities even of the pious mind. They may rage against us, who know not the groans and pains connected with obtaining the least acquaintance with the blessed God : and lastly, they may rage against us, who are deluded by none of the errors which they impute to us.”* The errors of Papias, Irenæus, Lactantius, Justin Martyr, in the Millenary opinion, of Saint Cyprian, Firmilian, the Asian and African fathers, in the question of re-baptization ; Saint Austin in his decretory and uncharitable sentence against the unbaptized children of Christian parents, the Roman or the Greek doctors in the question of the procession of the Holy Ghost, and in the matter of images, are examples beyond exception. “ The errors that attach to human minds are innumerable,” Now if these great personages had been persecuted or destroyed for their opinions, who should have answered the invaluable loss the church of God should have sustained in missing so excellent, so exemplary, and so great lights? But then if these persons erred, and by consequence, might have been destroyed, what should have become of others whose understanding was lower, and their security less, their errors more, and their danger greater? At this rate all men should have passed through the fire, for who can escape, when

* Illi in vos sæviant qui nesciunt cum quo labore verum inveniantur, et quam difficilè caveantur errores. Illi in vos sæviant qui nosciunt quam rarum et arduum sit carnalia phantasmata piæ mentis serenitate superare. Illi in vos sæviant qui nesciunt quibus et suspiriis et gemitibus fiat ut exquantulacunque parte possit intelligi Deus. Postremo illi in vos sæviant qui nullo tali errore decepti sunt, quali vos deceptos vident. St. August. Contr. Ep. Fund.

Saint Cyprian and St. Austin cannot? Now to say these persons were not to be persecuted because although they had errors, yet none condemned by the church, at that time or before, is to say nothing to the purpose, nor nothing that is true. Not true, because Saint Cyprian's error was condemned by Pope Stephen, which in the present sense of the prevailing party in the church of Rome, is to be condemned by the church. Not to the purpose; because it is nothing else but to say that the church did tolerate their errors. For since those opinions were open and manifest to the world, that the church did not condemn them, it was either because those opinions were by the church not thought to be errors, or if they were, yet she thought fit to tolerate the error and the erring person. And if she would do so still, it would in most cases be better than now it is. And yet if the church had condemned them, it had not altered the case as to this question, for either the persons upon the condemnation of their error should have been persecuted or not. If not, why shall they now, against the instance and precedent of those ages who were confessedly wise and pious, and whose practice are often made to us arguments to follow? If yea, and that they had been persecuted, it is the thing which this argument condemns, and the loss of the church had been invaluable in the losing or the provocation and temptation of such rare personages: and the example and the rule of so ill consequence, that all persons might upon the same ground have suffered, and though some had escaped, yet no man could have any more security from punishment than from error.

5. Either the disagreeing person is in error, or

not, but a true believer ; in either of the cases to persecute him is extremely imprudent. For if he be a true believer, then it is a clear case that we do open violence to God, and his servants, and his truth. If he be in error, what greater folly and stupidity than to give error the glory of martyrdom, and the advantages which are accidentally consequent to a persecution ? For as it was true of the martyrs, “ *Whenever we die we begin to live,*” *Quoties morimur toties nascimur*, and the increase of their trouble was the increase of their confidence and the establishment of their persuasions : so it is in all false opinions ; for that an opinion is true or false, is extrinsical or accidental to the consequence and advantages it gets by being afflicted. And there is a popular pity that follows all persons in misery, and that compassion breeds likeness of affections, and that very often produces likeness of persuasion ; and so much the rather, because there arises a jealousy and pregnant suspicion that they who persecute an opinion are destitute of sufficient arguments to confute it, and that the hangman is the best disputant. For if those arguments which they have for their own doctrine were a sufficient ground of confidence and persuasion, men would be more willing to use those means—arguments—which are better compliances with human understanding, which more naturally do satisfy it, which are more humane and Christian, than that way which satisfies none, which destroys many, which provokes more, which makes all men jealous. To which add, that those who die for their opinion, leave in all men, great arguments of the heartiness of their belief, of the confidence of their persuasion, of the piety and innocency of their

persons, of the purity of their intention, and simplicity of purposes; that they are persons totally disinterested, and separate from design. For no interest can be so great as to be put in balance against a man's life and his soul, and he does very imprudently serve his ends who seemingly and fore-knowingly loses his life in the prosecution of them. Just as if Titius should offer to die for Sempronius, upon condition he might receive twenty talents when he had done his work. It is certainly an argument of a great love, and a great confidence, and a great sincerity, and a great hope, when a man lays down his life in attestation of a proposition. *Greater love than this hath no man, than to lay down his life,* saith our blessed Saviour. And although laying of a wager is an argument of confidence more than truth, yet laying such a wager, staking of a man's soul, and pawning his life, gives a hearty testimony that the person is honest, confident, resigned, charitable and noble. And I know not whether truth can do a person or a cause more advantages, than these can do to an error. And therefore, besides the impiety, there is great imprudence in canonizing a heretic, and consecrating an error by such means, which were better preserved as encouragements of truth, and comforts to real and true martyrs. And it is not amiss to observe that this very advantage was taken by heretics, who were ready to shew and boast their catalogues of martyrs; in particular, the Circumcellians did so, and the Donatists, and yet the first were heretics, the second schismatics. And it was remarkable in the scholars of Priscillian, who, as they had their master in the reputation of a saint, while he was living, so when he was dead, they had him in

reverence as a martyr; they with reverence and devotion carried his, and the bodies of his slain companions to an honourable sepulture, and counted it religion to swear by the name of Priscillian. So that the extinguishing of the person, gives life and credit to his doctrine, and when he is dead, he yet speaks more effectually.

6. It is unnatural and unreasonable to persecute disagreeing opinions. Unnatural; for understanding being a thing wholly spiritual cannot be restrained, and therefore neither punished by corporal afflictions. It is in *alienâ republicâ*, a matter of another world; you may as well cure the cholic by brushing a man's clothes, or fill a man's belly with a syllogism: these things do not communicate in matter, and therefore neither in action nor passion; and since all punishments in a prudent government punish the offender to prevent a future crime, and so it proves more medicinal than vindictive, the punitive act being in order to the cure and prevention: and since no punishment of the body can cure a disease in the soul, it is disproportionable in nature, and in all civil government, to punish where the punishment can do no good. It may be an act of tyranny, but never of justice. For is an opinion ever the more true or false for being persecuted? Some men have believed it the more, as being provoked into a confidence, and vexed into a resolution, but the thing itself is not the truer, and though the hangman may confute a man with an inexplicable dilemma, yet not convince his understanding, for such premises can infer no conclusion, but that of a man's life: and a wolf may as well give laws to the understanding, as he whose dictates are only propounded in violence, and written in blood.

And a dog is as capable of a law as a man, if there be no choice in his obedience, nor discourse in his choice, nor reason to satisfy his discourse. And as it is unnatural, so it is unreasonable, that Sempronius should force Caius to be of his opinion, because Sempronius is consul this year, and commands the Lictors: as if he that can kill a man cannot but be infallible: and if he be not, why should I do violence to my conscience, because he can do violence to my person?

7. Force, in matters of opinion, can do no good, but is very apt to do hurt; for no man can change his opinion when he will, or be satisfied in his reason that his opinion is false, because discountenanced. If a man could change his opinion when he lists, he might cure many inconveniencies of his life: all his fears and his sorrows would soon disband, if he would but alter his opinion, whereby he is persuaded, that such an accident that afflicts him is an evil, and such an object formidable; let him but believe himself impregnable, or that he receives a benefit when he is plundered, disgraced, imprisoned, condemned, and afflicted, neither his sleeps need to be disturbed, nor his quietness discomposed. But if a man cannot change his opinion when he lists, nor ever does heartily or resolutely but when he cannot do otherwise, then to use force, may make him an hypocrite, but never to be a right believer, and so instead of erecting a trophy to God and true religion, we build a monument for the devil. Infinite examples are recorded in church story to this very purpose: but Socrates instances in one for all; for when Eleusius, bishop of Cyzicum, was threatened by the emperor Valens with banishment and confiscation, if he did not subscribe to the decree of

Ariminum, at last he yielded to the Arian opinion, and presently fell into great torment of conscience, openly at Cyzicum recanted the error, asked God and the church forgiveness, and complained of the emperor's injustice ; and that was all the good the Arian party got by offering violence to his conscience. And so many families in Spain which are as they call them, new Christians, and of a suspected faith, into which they were forced by the tyranny of the Inquisition, and yet are secret Moors, is evidence enough of the inconvenience of preaching a doctrine "in the face of a bloody sword," *in ore gladii cruentandi*. For it either punishes a man for keeping a good conscience, or forces him into a bad ; it either punishes sincerity, or persuades hypocrisy ; it persecutes a truth, or drives into error : and it teaches a man to dissemble and to be safe, but never to be honest.

8. It is one of the glories of Christian religion, that it was so pious, excellent, miraculous, and persuasive, that it came in upon its own piety and wisdom, with no other force but a torrent of arguments and demonstration of the Spirit ; a mighty rushing wind to beat down all strong holds, and every high thought and imagination ; but towards the persons of men it was always full of meekness and charity, compliance, and toleration, condescension and bearing with one another, *restoring persons overtaken with an error, in the spirit of meekness, considering lest we also be tempted*. The consideration is as prudent, and the proposition as just as the precept is charitable, and the precedent was pious and holy. Now things are best conserved with that which gives it the first being, and which is agreeable to its temper and constitution. That precept which it chiefly preaches in order to

all the blessedness in the world; that is, of meekness, mercy, and charity, should also preserve itself and promote its own interest. For indeed nothing will do it so well, nothing doth so excellently insinuate itself into the understandings and affections of men, as when the actions and persuasions of a sect, and every part and principle and promotion are univocal. And it would be a mighty disparagement to so glorious an insinuation, that in its principle it should be merciful and humane, and in the promotion and propagation of it so inhuman: and it would be improbable and unreasonable that the sword should be used in the persuasion of one proposition, and yet in the persuasion of the whole religion nothing like it. To do so, may serve the end of a temporal prince, but never promote the honour of Christ's kingdom; it may secure a design of Spain, but will very much disserve Christendom, to offer to support it by that which good men believe to be a distinctive cognizance of the Mahometan religion from the excellency and piety of Christianity; whose sense and spirit is described in those excellent words of St. Paul, 2 Tim. ii. 24. *The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging the truth.* They that oppose themselves, must not be stricken by any of God's servants; and if yet any man will smite these who are his opposites in opinion, he will get nothing by that, he must quit the title of being a servant of God for his pains. And I think a distinction of persons secular and ecclesiastical will do no advantage for an escape, because even the secular power, if it be Christian, and a servant of God

must not be "a striker. The servant of the Lord must not strive," *πλήκτικος*. *Δεῖλον Κυρίου εἶ δεῖ μάχεσθαι*, I mean in those cases where meekness of instruction is the remedy, or if the case be irremediable, abscission by censures is the penalty.

9. And if yet in the nature of the thing it were neither unjust nor unreasonable, yet there is nothing under God Almighty that hath power over the soul of man, so as to command a persuasion, or to judge a disagreeing: human positive laws direct all external acts in order to several ends, and the judges take cognizance accordingly, but no man can command the will, or punish him that obeys the law against his will: for because its end is served in external obedience, it neither looks after more, neither can it be served by more, nor take notice of any more. And yet possibly the understanding is less subject to human power than the will, for that human power hath a command over external acts which naturally and regularly flow from the will, "and at most," *et ut plurimum*, suppose a direct act of will; but always either a direct or indirect volition, primary or accidental; but the understanding is a natural faculty subject to no command, but where the command is itself a reason fit to satisfy and persuade it. And therefore God commanding us to believe such revelations, persuades and satisfies the understanding, by his commanding and revealing: for there is no greater probation in the world that a proposition is true, than because God hath commanded us to believe it. But because no man's command is a satisfaction to the understanding, or a verification of the proposition, therefore the understanding is not subject to human authority. They may persuade, but not enjoin where God hath not; and

where God hath, if it appears so to him, he is an infidel if he does not believe it. And if all men have no other efficacy or authority on the understanding but by persuasion, proposal, and entreaty, then a man is bound to assent, but according to the operation of the argument, and the energy of persuasion; neither indeed can he, though he would never so fain; and he that out of fear and too much compliance and desire to be safe, shall desire to bring his understanding with some luxation to the belief of human dictates and authorities, may as often miss of the truth as hit it, but is sure always to lose the comfort of truth, because he believes it upon indirect, insufficient, and incompetent arguments: and as his desire it should be so, is his best argument that it is so, so the pleasing of men is his best reward, and his not being condemned and contradicted all the possession of a truth.

SECTION XIV.

Of the practice of Christian Churches towards persons disagreeing, and when persecution first came in.

AND thus this truth hath been practiced in all times of Christian religion, when there were no collateral designs on foot, nor interests to be served, nor passions to be satisfied. In St. Paul's time, though the censure of heresy were not so loose and forward as afterwards, and all that were called heretics were clearly such, and highly criminal; yet as their crime was, so was their censure,

that is, spiritual. They were first admonished, once at least, for so Irenæus,* Tertullian,† Cyprian,‡ Ambrose,§ and Jerome|| read that place of Titus 3. But since that time, all men, and at that time some read it, “after a second admonition,” *post unam et alteram admonitionem*, reject a heretic. Rejection from the communion of saints after two warnings, that is the penalty. St. John expresses it by not *eating* with them, not bidding them *God speed*, but the persons against whom he decrees so severely, are such as denied Christ to be come in the flesh, direct antichrists: and let the sentence be as high as it lists in this case, all that I observe is, that since in so damnable doctrines nothing but spiritual censure, separation from the communion of the faithful, was enjoined and prescribed, we cannot pretend to an apostolical precedent, if in matters of dispute and innocent question, and of great uncertainty and no malignity, we should proceed to sentence of death.

For it is but an absurd and illiterate arguing, to say that excommunication is a greater punishment, and killing, a less; and therefore whoever may be excommunicated, may also be put to death (which indeed is the reasoning that Bellarmine uses) for first, excommunication is not directly, and of itself a greater punishment than corporeal death. Because it is indefinite, and incomplete, and in order to a further punishment; which if it happens, then the excommunication was the inlet to it, if it does not, the excommunication did not signify half so much as the loss of a member, much less, death. For it may be totally ineffectual,

* L. 3. cap. 3. † De prescript.

§ Upon this passage.

‡ Lib. ad quirinum.

|| Ibidem.

either by the iniquity of the proceeding, or repentance of the person: and in all times and cases it is a medicine if the man please; if he will not, but perseveres in his impiety, then it is himself that brings the censure to effect, that actuates the judgment and gives a sting, and an energy upon that which otherwise would be "without authority," *χωρὶς ἀκυροῦς*. Secondly, but when it is at worst, it does not kill the soul, it only consigns it to that death which it had deserved, and should have received independently from that sentence of the church. Thirdly, and yet excommunication is to admirable purpose; for whether it refers to the person censured, or to others, it is prudential in itself, it is exemplary to others, it is medicinal to all. For the person censured, is by this means threatened into piety, and the threatening made the more energetical upon him, because by fiction of law, or as it were by a sacramental representment, the pains of hell are made present to him; and so becomes an act of prudent judicature, and excellent discipline, and the best instrument of spiritual government: because the nearer the threatening is reduced to matter, and the more present and circumstantionable it is made, the more operative it is upon our spirits while they are immersed in matter. And this is the full sense and power of excommunication in its direct intention: consequently and accidentally other evils might follow it, as in the times of the Apostles, the censured persons were buffeted by Satan, and even at this day there is less security even to the temporal condition of such a person whom his spiritual parents have anathematized. But besides this, I know no warrant to affirm any thing of excommunication, for the sentence of the

church does but declare, not effect the final sentence of damnation. Whoever deserves excommunication deserves damnation; and he that repents shall be saved, though he die out of the church's external communion, and if he does not repent, he shall be damned though he was not excommunicate.

But suppose it greater than the sentence of corporeal death; yet it follows not, because heretics may be excommunicate, therefore killed, for from a greater to a less, in a several kind of things, the argument concludes not. It is a greater thing to make an excellent discourse than to make a shoe, yet he that can do the greater cannot do this less. An angel cannot beget a man, and yet he can do a greater matter in that kind of operations which we term spiritual and angelical. And if this were concluding, that whoever may be excommunicate may be killed, then, because of excommunications, the church is confessed the sole and entire judge, she is also an absolute disposer of the lives of persons. I believe this will be but ill doctrine in Spain: for in *Bullâ Coenæ Domini*, the king of Spain is every year excommunicated on Maunday Thursday; but if by the same power he might also be put to death (as upon this ground he may) the pope might with more ease be invested in that part of St. Peter's patrimony which that king hath invaded and surprised. But besides this, it were extreme harsh doctrine in a Roman consistory, from whence excommunications issue for trifles, for fees, for not suffering themselves infinitely to be oppressed, for any thing; if this be greater than death, how great a tyranny is that which does more than kill men for less than trifles, or else how inconsequent is that argument which

concludes its purpose upon so false pretence and supposition?

Well, however zealous the Apostles were against heretics, yet none were by them, or their dictates put to death. The death of Ananias and Sapphira, and the blindness of Elymas the sorcerer, amount not to this, for they were miraculous inflictions: and the first was a punishment to vow-breach and sacrilege, the second of sorcery, and open contestation against the religion of Jesus Christ; neither of them concerned the case of this present question: or if the case were the same, yet the authority is not the same: for he that inflicted these punishments was infallible, and of a power competent: but no man at this day is so. But as yet, people were converted by miracles, and preaching, and disputing, and heretics by the same means were redargued, and all men instructed, none tortured for their opinion. And this continued till Christian people were vexed by disagreeing persons, and were impatient and peevish by their own too much confidence and the luxuriancy of a prosperous fortune: but then they would not endure persons that did dogmatize any thing which might entrench upon their reputation or their interest. And it is observable, that no man, nor no age, did ever teach the lawfulness of putting heretics to death, till they grew wanton with prosperity. But when the reputation of the governors was concerned, when the interests of men were endangered, when they had something to lose, when they had built their estimation upon the credit of disputable questions, when they began to be jealous of other men, when they over-valued themselves and their own opinions, when some persons invaded bishoprics upon pretence of new opinions, then

they, as they thrived in the favour of emperors, and in the success of their disputes, solicited the temporal power to banish, to fine, to imprison, and to kill their adversaries.

So that the case stands thus. In the best times, amongst the best men, when there were fewer temporal ends to be served, when religion and the pure and simple designs of Christianity were only to be promoted; in those times and amongst such men, no persecution was actual, nor persuaded nor allowed towards disagreeing persons. But as men had ends of their own and not of Christ's, as they receded from their duty, and religion from its purity, as Christianity began to be compounded with interests, and blended with temporal designs, so men were persecuted for their opinions. This is most apparent, if we consider when persecution first came in, and if we observe how it was checked by the holiest and the wisest persons.

The first great instance I shall note, was in Priscillian and his followers, who were condemned to death by the tyrant Maximus. Which instance, although St. Jerome observes as a punishment and judgment for the crime of heresy, yet is of no use in the present question, because Maximus put some Christians of all sorts to death promiscuously, Catholic and heretic without choice, and therefore the Priscillianists might as well have called it a judgment upon the Catholics, as the Catholics upon them.

But when Ursatus and Stacius, two bishops, procured the Priscillianists death by the power they had at court, St. Martin was so angry at them for their cruelty, that he excommunicated them both. And St. Ambrose, upon the same stock, denied his communion to the Itaciani. And

the account that Sulpitius gives of the story is this, "the example was worse than the men. If the men were heretical, the execution of them however was unchristian." *

But it was of more authority that the Nicene fathers supplicated the emperor, and prevailed for the banishment of Arius; † of this we can give no other account, but that by the history of the time, ‡ we see baseness enough, and personal misdemeanor, and factiousness of spirit in Arius, to have deserved worse than banishment, though the obliquity of his opinion were not put into the balance; which we have reason to believe was not so much as considered, because Constantine gave toleration to differing opinions, and Arius himself was restored upon such conditions to his country and office, which would not stand with the ends of the Catholics, if they had been severe exactors of concurrence and union of persuasions.

I am still within the scene of ecclesiastical persons, and am considering what the opinion of the learnedest and the holiest prelates were, concerning this great question. If we will believe Saint Austin, (who was a credible person) no good man did allow it. "No good men approve of inflicting death upon any one, though he be a heretic." § This was St. Austin's final opinion;

* Hoc modo (says he) homines luce indignissimi pessimo exemplo necati sunt.

† Sozom. l. 1. c. 20.

‡ Socrat. l. 1. c. 26 Cont. Crescon. Grammat. lib. 3. c. 50. vide etiam Epist. 61. ad dulcilium. et Epist. 158. et 159. et lib. 1. c. 29. cont. tit. petilian. vide etiam Socrat. lib. 3. c. 3. et c. 29. lib. 2. cap. 5. retractat. vide Epist. 48. ad vincent. script. post. retract. et Epist. 50. ad Bonifac.

§ Nullis tamen bonis in Catholicâ hoc placet, si usque, ad mortem in quenquam licet hæreticum sæviatur.

for he had been first of the mind, that it was not honest to do any violence to mis-persuaded persons; and when, upon an accident happening in Hippo, he had altered and retracted that part of the opinion, yet then also he excepted death, and would by no means have any mere opinion made capital. But for ought appears, St. Austin had greater reason to have retracted that retraction, than his first opinion. For his saying of “*nullis bonis placet*”, was as true as the thing was reasonable it should be so. Witness those known testimonies of Tertullian,* Cyprian,† Lanctantius,‡ Jerome,§ Severus Sulpitius,|| Minutius,** Hilary,†† Damascen,‡‡ Chrysostom,§§ Theophylact,||| and Bernard,*** and divers others, whom the reader may find quoted by the arch-bishop of Spalato, lib. 8. de rep. Eccles. cap. 8.

Against this concurrent testimony my reading can furnish me with no adversary, nor contrary instances, but in Atticus of C. P. Theodosius of Synada, in Stacius and Ursæus before reckoned. Only indeed, some of the later popes of Rome, began to be busy and unmerciful, but it was then, when themselves were secure, and their interests great, and their temporal concerns highly considerable.

For it is most true, and not amiss to observe it, that no man who was under the ferula did ever think it lawful to have opinions forced, or heretics put to death, and yet many men who them-

* Ad Scapula. † Lib. 3. Ep. 1 Epist. ‡ Lib. 5. c. 20.

§ In cap. 13. Matth. et in cap. 2. hos.

|| In vit: S. Martin. ** Octav.

†† Cont. Auxent. Arr. ‡‡ 3. sect. c. 32.

§§ In cap. 13. Matth. hom. 47. ||| In Evang. Matth.

*** In verba Apost. fides ex auditu.

selves have escaped the danger of a pile and a faggot, have changed their opinion just as the case was altered, that is, as themselves were unconcerned in the suffering. Petilian, Parmenian, and Gaudentius,* by no means would allow it lawful, for themselves were in danger, and were upon that side that is ill thought of and discountenanced; but Gregory,† and Leo,‡ popes of Rome, upon whose side the authority and advantages were, thought it lawful they should be punished and persecuted, for themselves were unconcerned in the danger of suffering. And therefore St. Gregory commends the Exarch of Ravenna, for forcing them who dissented from those men who called themselves the church. And there were some divines in the Lower Germany, who upon great reasons spake against the tyranny of the Inquisition, and restraining Prophecy, who yet when they had shaken off the Spanish yoke, began to persecute their brethren. It was unjust in them, in all men unreasonable and uncharitable, and often increases the error, but never lessens the danger.

But yet although the church, I mean, in her distinct and clerical capacity, was against destroying or punishing difference in opinion, till the popes of Rome did super-seminate and persuade the contrary, yet the bishops did persuade the emperors to make laws against heretics, and to punish disobedient persons with fines, with imprisonment, with death and banishment respectively. This indeed calls us to a new account.

* Apud Aug. li. 1. c. 7. cont. Epist. Parmenian, et l. 2. c. 10. cont. tit. Petilian.

† Epist. 1. ad Turbium.

‡ Lib. 1. ep. 72.

For the church-men might not proceed to blood nor corporeal inflictions, but might they not deliver over to the secular arm, and persuade temporal princes to do it? For this, I am to say, that since it is notorious that the doctrine of the clergy was against punishing heretics, the laws which were made by the emperors against them, might be for restraint of differing religion in order to the preservation of the public peace, which is too frequently violated by the division of opinions. But I am not certain, whether that was always the reason, or whether or no, some bishops of the court did not also serve their own ends in giving their princes such untoward counsel; but we find the laws made severally to several purposes, in divers cases and with different severity. Constantine the emperor, made a sanction, “That such as erred only with the faithful might take the blessing of peace and quietness.”* The emperor Gratian, decreed, “That every one might follow what religious opinion he chose, and that all might come to the ecclesiastical conventions without any apprehensions.”† But he excepted the Manichees, the Photinians, and Eunomians. Theodosius the elder ‡, made a law of death against the Anabaptists of his time, and banished Eunomius, and against other erring persons appointed a pecuniary mulct; but he did no executions so severe as his sanctions, to shew they were made *in terrorem* only. § So were the

* Ut parem cum fidelibus ii qui errant pacis et quietis fructum gaudentes accipiant. Apud Euseb. de vita Constant.

† Ut quam quisq; vellet religionem sequeretur; et conventus Ecclesiasticos semoto metu omnes agerent.

‡ Vide Socrat. l. 7. c. 12.

§ Vid. Cod. de heretic. L. Manichees. et leg. Arriani, et l. Quicunque.

laws of Valentinian and Martian, decreeing, "Against all those who persist in teaching error," *contra omnes qui prava docere tenent*, that they should be put to death; so did Michael,* the emperor, but Justinian only decreed banishment.

But whatever whispers some politics might make to their princes, as the wisest and holiest did not think it lawful for churchmen alone to do executions, so neither did they transmit such persons to the secular judicature. And therefore, when the edict of Macedonius the president, was so ambiguous, that it seemed to threaten death to heretics, unless they recanted; St. Austin admonished him carefully to provide that no heretic should be put to death, alledging it also, not only to be unchristian, but illegal also, and not warranted by imperial constitutions; for before his time, no laws were made for their being put to death: but however he prevailed, that Macedonius published another edict, more explicit, and less seemingly severe. But in his epistle to Donatus, the African proconsul, he is more confident and determinate, "We are impelled by necessity rather to choose to perish by them, than to rush upon those who are marked out for destruction by your decrees."†

But afterwards, many got a trick of giving them over to the secular power, which at the best is no better then hypocrisy, removing envy from themselves, and laying it upon others, a refusing to do that in external act, which they do in council and approbation: which is a transmitting the act to another, and retaining a pro-

* Apud Paul Diac. l. 16. et l. 24.

† Necessitate nobis impactâ et indictâ, ut potius occidi ab eis eligamus, quam eos occidendos vestris judiciis ingeramus.

portion of guilt unto themselves, even their own and the others too. I end this with the saying of Chrysostom, "We ought to reprove and anathematize impious and heretical *doctrines*; but to spare the *men*, and pray for their salvation."*

SECTION XV.

How far the Church or Governors may act to the restraining false or differing opinions.

BUT although heretical persons are not to be destroyed, yet heresy being a work of the flesh, and all heretics criminal persons, whose acts and doctrine have influence upon communities of men, whether ecclesiastical or civil, the governors of the republic, or church respectively, are to do their duties in restraining those mischiefs which may happen to their several charges, for whose indemnity they are answerable. And therefore according to the effect or malice of the doctrine or the person, so the cognizance of them belongs to several judicatures. If it be false doctrine in any capacity, and doth mischief in any sense, or teaches ill life in any instance, or encourages evil in any particular, δὲ ἐπιστομίζειν, these men must be silenced, they must be convinced by sound doctrine, and put to silence by spiritual evidence, and restrained by authority ecclesiastical, that is by spiritual censures, according as it seems neces-

*Dogmata impia et quæ ab hæreticis profecta sunt arguere et anathematizare oportet, hominibus autem parcendum et pro salute eorum errandum. Serm. de Anathemate.

sary to him who is most concerned in the regimen of the church. For all this we have precept and precedent apostolical, and much reason. For by thus doing the governor of the church uses all that authority that is competent, and all the means that is reasonable, and that proceeding which is regular, that he may discharge his cure and secure his flock. And that he possibly may be deceived in judging a doctrine to be heretical, and by consequence the person excommunicated suffers injury, is no argument against the reasonableness of the proceeding. For all the injury that is, is visible and in appearance, and so is his crime. Judges must judge according to their best reason guided by law of God as their rule, and by evidence and appearance as their best instrument, and they can judge no better. If the judges be good and prudent, the error of proceeding will not be great, nor ordinary, and there can be no better establishment of human judicature, than is a fallible proceeding upon an infallible ground; and if the judgment of heresy be made by estimate and proportion of the opinion to a good or a bad life respectively, supposing an error in the deduction, there will be no malice in the conclusion; and that he endeavours to secure piety according to the best of his understanding, and yet did mistake in his proceeding, is only an argument that he did his duty after the manner of men, possibly with the piety of a saint, though not with the understanding of an angel. And the little inconvenience that happens to the person injuriously judged, is abundantly made up in the excellency of the discipline, the goodness of the example, the care of the public, and all those great influences into the manners of men which

derive from such an act so publicly consigned. But such public judgment in matters of opinion, must be seldom and curious, and never but to secure piety, and a holy life; for in matters speculative, as all determinations are fallible, so scarce any of them are to purpose, nor ever able to make compensation of either side, either for the public fraction, or the particular injustice, if it should so happen in the censure.

But then as the church may proceed thus far, yet no Christian man, or community of men may proceed farther. For if they be deceived in their judgment and censure, and yet have passed only spiritual censures, they are totally ineffectual, and come to nothing, there is no effect remaining upon the soul, and such censures are not to meddle with the body so much as indirectly. But if any other judgment pass upon persons erring, such judgments whose effects remain, if the person be unjustly censured, nothing will answer and make compensation for such injuries. If a person be excommunicated unjustly, it will do him no hurt, but if he be killed or dismembered unjustly, that censure and infliction is not made ineffectual by his innocence, he is certainly killed and dismembered. So that as the church's authority in such cases so restrained and made prudent, cautelous, and orderly, is just and competent: so the proceeding is reasonable, it is provident for the public, and the inconveniencies that may fall upon particulars so little, as that the public benefit makes ample compensation, so long as the proceeding is but spiritual.

This discourse is in the case of such opinions, which by the former rules are formal heresies, and upon practical inconveniencies. But for

matters of question which have not in them an enmity to the public tranquillity, as the republic hath nothing to do, upon the ground of all the former discourses; so if the church meddles with them where they do not derive into ill life, either in the person or in the consequent, or else are destructions of the foundation of religion, which is all one, for that those fundamental articles are of greatest necessity in order to a virtuous and godly life, which is wholly built upon them, (and therefore are principally necessary) if she meddles further, otherwise than by preaching, and conferring, and exhortation, she becomes tyrannical in her government, makes herself an immediate judge of consciences and persuasions, lords it over their faith, destroys unity, and charity; and as if he that dogmatizes the opinion becomes criminal, if he troubles the church with an immodest, peevish, and pertinacious proposal of his article, not simply necessary; so the church does not do her duty, if she so condemns it *pro tribunali* as to enjoin him and all her subjects to believe the contrary. And as there may be pertinacy in doctrine, so there may be pertinacy in judging, and both are faults. The peace of the church and the unity of her doctrine is best conserved when it is judged by the proportion it hath to that rule of unity which the Apostles gave, that is the creed for articles of mere belief, and the precepts of Jesus Christ, and the practical rules of piety, which are most plain and easy, and without controversy, set down in the gospels and writings of the Apostles. But to multiply articles, and adopt them into the family of the faith, and to require assent to such articles which (as St. Paul's phrase is) are of doubtful

disputation, equal to that assent we give to matters of faith, is to build a tower upon the top of a bulrush, and the further the effect of such proceedings does extend, the worse they are; the very making such a law is unreasonable, the inflicting spiritual censures upon them that cannot do so much violence to their understanding as to obey it, is unjust and ineffectual; but to punish the person with death, or with corporeal infliction, indeed it is effectual, but it is therefore tyrannical. We have seen what the church may do towards restraining false or differing opinions; next I shall consider, by way of corollary, what the prince may do as for his interest, and only in securing his people, and serving the ends of true religion.

SECTION XVI.

Whether it be lawful for a Prince to give Toleration to several Religions.

FOR upon these very grounds we may easily give account of that great question, "Whether it be lawful for a prince to give toleration to several religions?"

For first, it is a great fault that men will call the several sects of Christians by the names of several religions. The religion of JESUS CHRIST is the form of sound doctrine and wholesome words, which is set down in Scripture indefinitely, actually conveyed to us by plain places, and separated as for the question of necessary or not

necessary by the symbol of the Apostles. Those impertinencies which the wantonness and vanity of men hath commenced, which their interests have promoted, which serve not truth so much as their own ends, are far from being distinct religions; for matters of opinion are no parts of the worship of God, nor in order to it, but as they promote obedience to his commandments; and when they contribute towards it, are in that proportion as they contribute parts and actions, and minute particulars of that religion to whose end they do, or pretend to serve. And such are all the sects and all the pretences of Christians, but pieces and minutes of Christianity, if they do serve the great end, as every man for his own sect and interest believes for his share, it does.

2. Toleration hath a double sense or purpose, for sometimes by it, men understand a public licence and exercise of a sect: sometimes it is only an indemnity of the persons privately to convene and to opine as they see cause, and as they mean to answer to God. Both these are very much to the same purpose, unless some persons whom we are bound to satisfy, be scandalized, and then the prince is bound to do, as he is bound to satisfy. To God it is all one. For abstracting from the offence of persons, which is to be considered just as our obligation is to content the persons, it is all one whether we indulge to them to meet publicly or privately, to do actions of religion concerning which, we are not persuaded that they are truly holy. To God it is just one to be in the dark and in the light, the thing is the same, only the circumstance of public and private is different, which cannot be concerned in any thing, nor can it concern any thing but the matter of

scandal, and relation to the minds and fantasies of certain persons.

3. So that to tolerate is not to persecute. And the question whether the prince may tolerate divers persuasions, is no more than, whether he may lawfully persecute any man for not being of his opinion. Now in this case he is just so to tolerate diversity of persuasions, as he is to tolerate public actions, for no opinion is judicable, nor no person punishable, but for a sin, and if his opinion by reason of its managing, or its effect, be a sin in itself, or becomes a sin to the person, then as he is to do towards other sins, so to that opinion, or man so opining. But to believe so, or not so, when there is no more but mere believing, is not in his power to enjoin, therefore not to punish. And it is not only lawful to tolerate disagreeing persuasions, but the authority of God only is competent to take notice of it, and infallible to determine it, and fit to judge; and therefore no human authority is sufficient to do all those things which can justify the inflicting temporal punishments upon such as do not conform in their persuasions to a rule or authority which is not only fallible, but supposed by the disagreeing person to be actually deceived.

But I consider, that in the toleration of a different opinion, religion is not properly and immediately concerned, so as in any degree to be endangered. "It is the natural right of every person to worship as he thinks best; for it is not a part of religion to force religion, which ought to be a matter of free choice, not of compulsion."*

* *Humani juris et naturalis potestatis, unicuique quod putaverit, colere. Sed nec religionis est cogere religionem, quæ suscipi sponte debet, non vi. Tertul. ad Scapulam.*

For it may be safe in diversity of persuasions, and it also a part of Christian religion that the liberty of men's consciences should be preserved in all things, where God hath not set a limit and made a restraint; that the soul of man should be free, and acknowledge no master but Jesus Christ; that matters spiritual should not be restrained by punishments corporeal; that the same meekness and charity should be preserved in the promotion of Christianity, that gave it foundation and increment, and firmness in its first publication; that conclusions should not be more dogmatical than the virtual resolution and efficacy of the premises: and that the persons should not more certainly be condemned than their opinions confuted; and lastly, that the infirmities of men and difficulties of things should be both put in balance to make abatement in the definitive sentence against men's persons. But then, because toleration of opinions is not properly a question of religion, it may be a question of policy: and although a man may be a good Christian, though he believe an error not fundamental, and not directly or evidently impious, yet his opinion may accidentally disturb the public peace through the over-activeness of the person, and the confidence of their belief, and the opinion of its appendant necessity, and therefore toleration of differing persuasions in these cases, is to be considered upon political grounds, and is just so to be admitted or denied as the opinions or toleration of them may consist with the public and necessary ends of government. Only this: as Christian princes must look to the interest of their government, so especially must they consider the interests of Christianity, and not call every redargution or

modest discovery of an established error, by the name of disturbance of the peace. For it is very likely that the peevishness and impatience of contradiction in the governors may break the peace. Let them remember but the gentleness of Christianity, the Liberty of consciences which ought to be preserved, and let them do justice to the persons, whoever they are, that are peevish, provided no man's person be over-born with prejudice. For if it be necessary for all men to subscribe to the present established religion, by the same reason at another time, a man may be bound to subscribe to the contradictory, and so to all religions in the world. And they only, who by their too much confidence entitle God to all their fancies, and make them to be questions of religion, and evidences for heaven, or consignations to hell, they only think this doctrine unreasonable, and they are the men that first disturb the church's peace, and then think there is no appeasing the tumult but by getting the victory. But they that consider things wisely, understand, that since salvation and damnation depend not upon impertinencies, and yet that public peace and tranquillity may, the prince is in this case to seek how to secure government, and the issues and intentions of that, while there is in these cases, directly no insecurity to religion, unless by the accidental uncharitableness of them that dispute: which uncharitableness is also much prevented when the public peace is secured, and no person is on either side engaged upon revenge, or troubled with disgrace, or vexed with punishments by any decretory sentence against him. "Gentleness wins the mind, but asperity kindles hatred and promotes cruel dis-

oords.”* It was the saying of a wise statesman, (I mean Thuanus,) “If you persecute heretics or discrepant, they unite themselves as to a common defence: if you permit them, they divide themselves upon private interest, and the rather, if this interest was an ingredient of the opinion.”

The sum is this, it concerns the duty of a prince because it concerns the honor of God, that all vices and every part of ill life be discountenanced and restrained: and therefore in relation to that, opinions are to be dealt with. For the understanding being to direct the will, and opinions to guide our practices, they are considerable only as they teach impiety and vice, as they either dishonour God or disobey him. Now all such doctrines are to be condemned; but for the persons preaching such doctrines, if they neither justify nor approve the pretended consequences which are certainly impious, they are to be separated from that consideration. But if they know such consequences and allow them, or if they do not stay till the doctrines produce impiety, but take sin before-hand, and manage them impiously in any sense; or if either themselves or their doctrine do really and without colour or feigned pretext, disturb the public peace and just interests, they are not to be suffered. “Dion Cassius relates the following wise piece of advice, given to Augustus by Mecænas; abhor and restrain those who are guilty of innovations in religion, not only for the sake of the gods, but because those who

* *Dextera præcipuè capit indulgentia mentes, asperitas odii sævaq; bella parit.*

† *Hæretici qui pace data factionibus scinduntur, persecutione uniuntur contra remp.*

introduce new divinities, influence multitudes to change their faith: whence arise conspiracies, seditions, riots, which only tend to obstruct good government. The laws moreover express, that whatever is done against religion is a general mischief."* In all other cases it is not only lawful to permit them, but it is also necessary, that princes, and all in authority, should not persecute discrepant opinions. And in such cases, wherein persons not otherwise incompetent, are bound to reprove an error, (as they are in many) in all these, if the prince makes restraint, he hinders men from doing their duty, and from obeying the laws of JESUS CHRIST.

SECTION XVII.

Of compliance with disagreeing persons or weak consciences in general.

UPON these grounds, it remains that we reduce this doctrine to practical conclusions, and consider among the differing sects and opinions which trouble these parts of Christendom, and come into our concernment, which sects of Christians are to be tolerated, and how far? and which

* Extat prudens monitum Mecænatis apud Dionem Cassium ad Augustum in hæc verba. Eos vero qui in divinis aliquid innovant, odio habe, et coerce, non deorum solum causâ: sed quia nova numina hi tales introducentes multos impellunt ad mutationem rerum. Unde conjurationes, seditiones, conciliabula existunt, res profecto minime conducibiles principatui. Et legibus quoque; expressum est, quod in religionem committitur, in omnium fertur injuriam.

are to be restrained and punished in their several proportions ?

The first consideration is, that since diversity of opinions does more concern public peace than religion, what is to be done to persons who disobey a public sanction upon a true allegation ; that they cannot believe it to be lawful to obey such constitutions, although they disbelieve them upon insufficient grounds, that is, whether in *constituta lege*, disagreeing persons or weak consciences are to be complied withal, and their disobeying and disagreeing tolerated ?

1. In this question, there is no distinction can be made between persons truly weak, and but pretending so. For all that pretend to it, are to be allowed the same Liberty whatsoever it be ; for no man's spirit is known to any, but to God and himself : and therefore pretences and realities in this case, are both alike in order to the public toleration. And this very thing is one argument to persuade a negative. For the chief thing in this case is the concernment of public government, which is then most of all violated, when what may prudently be permitted to some purposes, may be demanded to many more, and the piety of the laws abused to the impiety of other men's ends. And if laws be made so malleable, as to comply with weak consciences, he that hath a mind to disobey, is made impregnable against the coercitive power of the law by this pretence. For a weak conscience signifies nothing in this case, but a dislike of the law upon a contrary persuasion. For if some weak consciences do obey the law, and others do not, it is not their weakness indefinitely that is the cause of it, but a definite and particular persuasion to the contrary. So that if such a

pretence be excuse sufficient from obeying, then the law is a sanction, obliging every one to obey that hath a mind to it, and he that hath not, may choose; that is, it is no law at all, for he that hath a mind to it may do it if there be no law, and he that hath no mind to it need not for all the law.

And therefore the wit of man cannot prudently frame a law of that temper and expedient, but either he must lose the formality of a law, and neither have power coercitive nor obligatory, but “by the will of inferiors,” *ad arbitrium inferiorum*, or else it cannot antecedently to the particular case give leave to any sort of men to disagree or disobey.

2. Suppose that a law be made with great reason so as to satisfy divers persons, pious and prudent, that it complies with the necessity of government, and promotes the interest of God’s service and public order, it may easily be imagined that these persons which are obedient sons of the church, may be as zealous for the public order and discipline of the church, as others for their opinion against it, and may be as much scandalized if disobedience be tolerated, as others are if the law be exacted, and what shall be done in this case? Both sorts of men cannot be complied withal, because as these pretend to be offended at the law, and by consequence (if they understand the consequents of their own opinion) at them that obey the law: so the others are justly offended at them that unjustly disobey it. If therefore there be any on the right side as confident and zealous as they who are on the wrong side, then the disagreeing persons are not to be complied with, to avoid giving offence; for if they be, offence is given to better persons, and so the mischief,

which such complying seeks to prevent, is made greater and more unjust, obedience is discouraged, and disobedience is legally canonized for the result of a holy and a tender conscience.

3. Such complying with the disagreements of a sort of men, is the total overthrow of all discipline, and it is better to make no laws of public worship, than to rescind them in the very constitution : and there can be no end in making the sanction, but to make the law ridiculous, and the authority contemptible. For to say that complying with weak consciences in the very framing of a law of discipline, is the way to preserve unity, were all one as to say, to take away all laws is the best way to prevent disobedience. In such matters of indifference, the best way of cementing the fraction, is to unite the parts in the authority, for then the question is but one, viz. Whether the authority must be obeyed or not ? But if a permission be given of disputing the particulars, the questions become next to infinite. A mirror, when it is broken, represents the object multiplied and divided : but if it be entire, and through one centre transmits the species to the eye, the vision is one and natural. Laws are the mirror in which men are to dress and compose their actions, and therefore must not be broken with such clauses of exception which may without remedy be abused to the prejudice of authority, and peace, and all human sanctions. And I have known in some churches that this pretence hath been nothing but a design to discredit the law, to dismantle the authority that made it, to raise their own credit, and a trophy of their zeal ; to make it a characteristic note of a sect, and the cognizance of holy persons, and yet the men that claimed exemption

from the laws, upon pretence of having weak consciences, if in hearty expression you had told them so to their heads, they would have spit in your face, and were so far from confessing themselves weak, that they thought themselves able to give laws to Christendom, to instruct the greatest clerks, and to catechise the church herself; and which is the worst of all, they who were perpetually clamorous that the severity of the laws should slacken as to their particular, and in matter, adiaphorous (in which, if the church hath any authority, she hath power to make laws) to indulge a leave to them to do as they list, yet were the most imperious amongst men, most decretory in their sentences, and most impatient of any disagreeing from them, though in the least minute and particular: whereas by all the justice of the world, they who persuade such a compliance in matters of fact, and of so little question, should not deny to tolerate persons that differ in questions of great difficulty and contestation.

4. But yet since all things almost in the world have been made matters of dispute, and the will of some men, and the malice of others, and the infinite industry and pertinacy of contesting and resolution to conquer, hath abused some persons innocently into a persuasion, that even the laws themselves, though never so prudently constituted, are superstitious or impious, such persons who are otherwise pious, humble, and religious, are not to be destroyed for such matters, which in themselves are not of concernment to salvation, and neither are so accidentally to such men; and in such cases where they are innocently abused, and they err without purpose and design. And, therefore, if there be a public disposition in some persons, to

dislike laws of a certain quality, if it be foreseen, it is to be considered *in lege dicendâ* ; and whatever inconvenience or particular offence is foreseen, is either to be directly avoided in the law, or else a compensation in the excellency of the law, and certain advantages, made to out-weigh their pretensions : but *in lege jam dictâ*, because there may be a necessity some persons should have a Liberty indulged them, it is necessary that the governors of the church should be entrusted with a power to consider the particular case, and indulge a Liberty to the person, and grant personal dispensations. This I say is to be done at several times, upon particular instance, upon singular consideration, and new emergencies. But that a whole kind of men, such a kind to which all men without possibility of being confuted may pretend, should at once, in the very frame of the law, be permitted to disobey, is to nullify the law, to destroy discipline, and to hallow disobedience ; it takes away the obliging part of the law, and makes that the thing enacted shall not be enjoined, but tolerated only : it destroys unity and uniformity, which to preserve was the very end of such laws of discipline : it bends the rule to the thing which is to be ruled, so that the law obeys the subject, not the subject the law : it is to make a law for particulars, not upon general reason and congruity, against the prudence and design of all laws in the world, and absolutely without the example of any church in Christendom ; it prevents no scandal, for some will be scandalized at the authority itself, some at the complying, and remissness of discipline, and several men at matters, and upon ends contradictory : all which cannot, some ought not to be complied withal.

5. The sum is this. The end of the laws of discipline are in an immediate order to the conservation and ornament of the public, and therefore the laws must not so tolerate, as by conserving persons to destroy themselves and the public benefit, but if there be cause for it, they must be cassated, or if there be no sufficient cause, the complyings must be so as may best preserve the particulars in conjunction with the public end, which because it is primarily intended, is of greatest consideration. But the particulars, whether of case or person, are to be considered occasionally and emergently by the judges, but cannot antecedently and regularly be determined by a law.

But this sort of men is of so general pretence, that all laws and all judges may easily be abused by them. Those sects which are signified by a name, which have a system of articles, a body of profession, may be more clearly determined in their question concerning the lawfulness of permitting their professions and assemblies.

I shall instance in two, which are most troublesome and most disliked ; and by an account made of these, we may make judgment what may be done towards others whose errors are not apprehended of so great malignity. The men I mean, are the anabaptists and the papists.

SECTION XVIII.

A particular consideration of the opinions of the Anabaptists.

IN the Anabaptists I consider only their two capital opinions, the one against the baptism of infants, the other against magistracy : and because they produce different judgments and various effects, all their other fancies, which vary as the moon does, may stand or fall in their proportion and likeness to these.

And first, I consider their denying baptism to infants ; although it be a doctrine justly condemned by the most sorts of Christians, upon great grounds of reason, yet possibly their defence may be so great, as to take off much, and rebate the edge of their adversaries' assault. It will be neither unpleasant nor unprofitable to draw a short scheme of plea for each party, the result of which possibly may be, that though they be deceived, yet they have so great excuse on their side, that their error is not impudent or vincible. The baptism of infants rests wholly upon this discourse.

When God made a covenant with Abraham for himself and his posterity, into which the Gentiles were reckoned by spiritual adoption, he did for the present consign that covenant with the sacrament of circumcision. The extent of which rite, was to all his family, from the " master," *major domo*, to the " servant," *proselytus domicilio*, and to infants of eight days old. Now the very nature of this covenant being a covenant of faith for its formality, and with all faithful people for

the object; and circumcision being a seal of this covenant, if ever any rite do supervene to consign the same covenant, that rite must acknowledge circumcision for its type and precedent. And this the Apostle tells us in express doctrine. Now the nature of types, is to give some proportions to its successor the anti-type, and they both being seals of the same righteousness of faith, it will not easily be found where these two seals have any such distinction in their nature or purposes, as to appertain to persons of differing capacity, and not equally concern all, and this argument was thought of so much force by some of those excellent men which were bishops in the primitive church, that a good bishop wrote an epistle to St. Cyprian, to know of him whether or no it were lawful to baptize infants before the eighth day, because the type of baptism was ministered in that circumcision, he in his discourse supposing that the first rite was a direction to the second, which prevailed with him so far as to believe it to limit every circumstance.

And not only this type, but the acts of Christ which were previous to the institution of baptism, did prepare our understanding by such impresses as were sufficient to produce such persuasion in us, that Christ intended this ministry for the actual advantage of infants as well as of persons of understanding. For Christ commanded that children should be brought unto him, he took them in his arms, he imposed hands on them and blessed them, and without question, did by such acts of favor consign his love to them, and them to a capacity of an eternal participation of it. And possibly the invitation which Christ made to all to come to him, all them that are heavy laden,

did, in its proportion concern infants as much as others, if they be guilty of original sin, and if that sin be a burthen, and presses them to any spiritual danger or inconvenience. And it is all the reason of the world, that since the grace of Christ is as large as the prevarication of Adam, all they who are made guilty by the first Adam, should be cleansed by the second. But as they are guilty by another man's act, so they should be brought to the font, to be purified by others, there being the same proportion of reason, that by others' acts, they should be relieved who were in danger of perishing by the act of others. And therefore, St. Austin argues excellently to this purpose. "The church accommodates them with the feet of others that they may come with heart of others that they may believe, with the tongue of others that they may make confession; for as they are diseased, in consequence of another's sin, so being made whole by another's confession they are saved."* And Justin Martyr, "The children of pious parents who bring them to be baptized, are accounted worthy by baptism."†

But whether they have original sin or no, yet take them *in puris naturalibus*, they cannot go to God, or attain to eternity: to which they were intended in their first being and creation, and therefore much less since their naturals are impaired by the curse on human nature procured by

* Accommodat illis mater ecclesia aliorum pedes, ut veniant; aliorum cor, ut credant; aliorum linguam ut fateantur; ut quoniam quod ægri sunt, alio peccante prægravantur, sic cum sani fiant alio confitente salventur. Serm. 10, de verb. Apost.

† ἀξιῦνται δὲ τῶν διὰ τῆ βαπτίσματος ἀγαθῶν τὰ βρέφη τῇ πίσει τῶν προσφεροντων ἀντὰ τῷ βαπτίσματι. Resp. ad Orthodoxos.

Adam's prevarication. And if a natural agent cannot "by mere nature," *in puris naturalibus* attain to heaven, which is a supernatural end, much less when it is laden with accidental and grievous impediments. Now then since the only way revealed to us of acquiring heaven is by Jesus Christ; and the first inlet into Christianity, and access to him is by baptism, as appears by the perpetual analogy of the New Testament; either infants are not persons capable of that end which is the perfection of human nature, and to which the soul of man in its being made immortal was essentially designed, and so are miserable and deficient from the very end of humanity, if they die before the use of reason; or else they must be brought to Christ by the church doors, that is, by the font and waters of baptism.

And in reason, it seems more pregnant and plausible that infants rather than men of understanding should be baptized: for since the efficacy of the sacraments depends upon divine institution and immediate benediction, and that they produce their effects independently upon man, in them that do not hinder their operation; since infants cannot by any act of their own, promote the hope of their own salvation, which men of reason and choice may, by acts of virtue and election; it is more agreeable to the goodness of God, the honour and excellency of the sacrament, and the necessity of its institution, that it should in infants supply the want of human acts and free obedience. Which the very thing itself seems to say it does, because its effect is from God, and requires nothing on man's part, but that its efficacy be not hindered: and then in infants, the disposition is equal, and the necessity more; they cannot object to others' acts,

and by the same reason cannot do others' acts, which without the sacraments do advantage us towards our hopes of heaven, and therefore have more need to be supplied by an act, and an institution divine and supernatural.

And this is not only necessary in respect of the condition of infants in capacity, to do acts of grace, but also in obedience to divine precept. For Christ made a law whose sanction is with an exclusive negative to them that are not baptized, "*Unless a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven;*" if then, infants have a capacity of being co-heirs with Christ in the kingdom of his Father, as Christ affirms they have, by saying, "*For of such is the kingdom of heaven,*" then there is a necessity that they should be brought to baptism, there being an absolute exclusion of all persons unbaptized, and all persons not spiritual from the kingdom of heaven.

But indeed, it is a destruction of all the hopes and happiness of infants, a denying to them an exemption from the final condition of beasts and insectiles, or else a designing of them to a worse misery, to say that God hath not appointed some external or internal means of bringing them to an eternal happiness: internal they have none; for grace being an improvement, and heightening the faculties of nature, in order to a heightened and supernatural end, grace hath no influence or efficacy upon their faculties, who can do no natural acts of understanding: and if there be no external means, then they are destitute of all hopes, and possibilities of salvation.

But thanks be to God, he hath provided better and told us accordingly, for he hath made a

promise of the Holy Ghost to infants as well as to men: "*The promise is made to you and to your children,*" said St. Peter; "*The promise of the Father, the promise that he would send the Holy Ghost:*" now if you ask how this promise shall be conveyed to our children, we have an express out of the same sermon of St. Peter, "*Be baptized, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost;*"* so that therefore, because the Holy Ghost is promised, and baptism is the means of receiving the promise, therefore baptism pertains to them, to whom the promise, which is the effect of baptism, does appertain. And that we may not think this argument is fallible, or of human collection, observe that it is the argument of the same Apostle in express terms; for in the case of Cornelius and his family, he justified his proceeding by this very medium, "*Shall we deny baptism to them who have received the gift of the Holy Ghost as well as we?*" Which discourse if it be reduced to form of argument, says this, they that are capable of the same grace are receptive of the same sign; but then (to make the syllogism up with an assumption proper to our present purpose) infants are capable of the same grace, that is, of the Holy Ghost (for the promise is made to our children as well as to us, and St. Paul says, the children of believing parents are holy, and therefore have the Holy Ghost, who is the fountain of holiness and sanctification,) therefore they are to receive the sign and the seal of it, that is, the sacrament of baptism.

And indeed since God entered a covenant with the Jews, which did also actually involve their

* Act. 2. 38, 39.

children, and gave them a sign to establish the covenant, and its appendant promise, either God does not so much love the church as he did the synagogue, and the mercies of the gospel are more restrained, than the mercies of the law, God having made a covenant with the infants of *Israel*, and none with the children of Christian parents; or if he hath, yet we want the comfort of its consignation; and unless our children are to be baptized, and so entitled to the promises of the new covenant, as the Jewish babes were by circumcision, this mercy which appertains to infants is so secret, and undeclared, and unconsigned, that we want much of that mercy and outward testimony which gave them comfort and assurance.

And in proportion to these precepts and revelations was the practice apostolical: for they (to whom Christ gave in precept to make disciples all nations baptizing them, and knew that nations without children never were, and that therefore they were passively concerned in that commission,) baptized whole families, particularly that of *Stephanus*, and divers others, in which it is more than probable there were some minors, if not sucking babes. And this practice did descend upon the church in after ages by tradition apostolical: of this we have sufficient testimony from *Origen*, "The church has received it by tradition from the Apostles, to baptize little children."* And *St. Austin*, "The church has practised it upon the faith of the fathers."† And generally all writers, (as *Calvin* says,) affirm the same thing:

* *Pro hoc ecclesia ab Apostolis traditionem accepit, etiam parvulis baptismum dare. In Rom. 6. tom. 2. pag. 543.*

† *Hoc ecclesia à majorum fide percepit. Serm. 10. de verb. Apost. c. 2.*

for "There is no writer so ancient as not to refer its origin to the apostolic age."* From hence the conclusion is, that infants ought to be baptized, that it is simply necessary, that they who deny it are heretics, and such are not to be endured because they deny to infants hopes, and take away the possibility of their salvation, which is revealed to us on no other condition of which they are capable but baptism. For by the insinuation of the type, by the action of Christ, by the title infants have to heaven, by the precept of the gospel, by the energy of the promise, by the reasonableness of the thing, by the infinite necessity on the infant's part, by the practice apostolical, by their tradition, and the universal practice of the church; by all these God and good people proclaim the lawfulness, the conveniency, and the necessity of infants' baptism.

To all this, the Anabaptist gives a soft and gentle answer, that it is a goodly harangue, which upon strict examination will come to nothing; that it pretends fairly and signifies little; that some of these allegations are false, some impertinent, and all the rest insufficient.

For the argument from circumcision is invalid upon infinite considerations; figures and types prove nothing, unless a commandment go along with them; or some express to signify such to be their purpose: for the deluge of waters and the ark of Noah were a figure of baptism said Peter; and if therefore the circumstances of one should be drawn to the other, we should make baptism a prodigy rather than a rite: the pascal lamb was

* Nullus est scriptor tam vetustus, qui non ejus originem ad apostolorum sæculum pro certo referat. 4. Instit. cap. 16. § 8.

a type of the eucharist, which succeeds the other as baptism does to circumcision; but because there was in the manducation of the pascal lamb, no prescription of sacramental drink, shall we thence conclude that the eucharist is to be ministered but in one kind? And even in the very instance of this argument, supposing a correspondence of analogy between circumcision and baptism, yet there is no correspondence of identity: for although it were granted that both of them did consign the covenant of faith, yet there is nothing in the circumstance of children's being circumcised that so concerns that mystery, but that it might very well be given to children, and yet baptism only to men of reason; because circumcision left a character in the flesh, which being imprinted upon infants did its work to them when they came to age; and such a character was necessary because there was no word added to the sign; but baptism imprints nothing that remains on the body, and if it leaves a character at all, it is upon the soul, to which also, the word is added which is as much a part of the sacrament as the sign itself is; for both which reasons, it is requisite that the persons baptized should be capable of reason, that they may be capable both of the word of the sacrament, and the impress made upon the spirit: since therefore the reason of this parity does wholly fail, there is nothing left to infer a necessity of complying in this circumstance of age any more than in the other annexes of the type: and the case is clear in the bishop's question to Cyprian,* for why shall not infants be baptized just upon the eighth day as well as circum-

* L. 3. Epist. 8. ad Fidum.

cised? If the correspondence of the rites be an argument to infer one circumstance which is impertinent and accidental to the mysteriousness of the rite, why shall it not infer all? And then also females must not be baptized, because they were not circumcised: but it were more proper if we would understand it right, to prosecute the analogy from the type to the anti-type, by way of letter and spirit, and signification; and as circumcision figures baptism, so also the adjuncts of the circumcision shall signify something spiritual, in the adherencies of baptism: and therefore as infants were circumcised, so spiritual infants shall be baptized, which is spiritual circumcision; for therefore babes had the ministry of the type, to signify that we must, when we give our names to Christ become, *νήπιοι ἐν πονηρίᾳ*, “children in malice.” *For unless you become like one of these little ones, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven*, said our blessed Saviour, and then the type is made complete. And this seems to have been the sense of the primitive church; for in the age next to the Apostles, they gave to all baptized persons milk and honey to represent to them their duty, that though in age and understanding they were men, yet they were babes in Christ, and children in malice. But to infer the sense of the Pædo-baptists is so weak a manner of arguing, that Austin, whose device it was, (and men use to be in love with their own fancies) at the most, pretended it but as probable and a mere conjecture.

And as ill success will they have with the other arguments as with this; for from the action of Christ's blessing infants, to infer that they are to be baptized, proves nothing so much as that there

is great want of better arguments; the conclusion would be with more probability derived thus: Christ blessed children and so dismissed them, but baptized them not, therefore infants are not to be baptized: but let this be as weak as its enemy, yet that Christ did not baptize them, is an argument sufficient that Christ hath other ways of bringing them to heaven than by baptism, he passed his act of grace upon them by benediction and imposition of hands.

And therefore, although neither infants nor any man in *puris naturalibus*, can attain to a supernatural end, without the addition of some instrument or means of God's appointing ordinarily and regularly, yet where God hath not appointed a rule nor an order, as in the case of infants we contend he hath not, the argument is invalid. And as we are sure that God hath not commanded infants to be baptized; so we are sure God will do them no injustice, nor damn them for what they cannot help.

And therefore, let them be pressed with all the inconveniencies that are consequent to original sin, yet either it will not be laid to the charge of infants, so as to be sufficient to condemn them; or if it could, yet the mercy and absolute goodness of God will secure them, if he takes them away before they can glorify him with a free obedience; "Why is innocent infancy to be anxious for the remission of sins,"* was the question of Tertullian, (*lib. de bapt.*) he knew no such danger from their original guilt as to drive them to a laver of which in that age of innocence they had no need, as he conceived. And therefore, there is no necessity of

* Quid ergo festinat innocens ætas ad remissionem peccatorum.

flying to the help of others, for tongue, and heart, and faith, and predispositions to baptism; for what need all this stir? As infants without their own consent, without any act of their own, and without any exterior solemnity contracted the guilt of Adam's sin, and so are liable to all the punishment which can with justice descend upon his posterity who are personally innocent; so infants shall be restored without any solemnity or act of their own, or of any other men for them, by the second Adam, by the redemption of Jesus Christ, by his righteousness and mercies applied either immediately, or how or when he shall be pleased to appoint. And so Austin's argument will come to nothing, without any need of god-fathers, or the faith of any body else. And it is too narrow a conception of God Almighty, because he hath tied us to the observation of the ceremonies of his own institution, that therefore he hath tied himself to it. Many thousand ways there are, by which God can bring any reasonable soul to himself: but nothing is more unreasonable, than because he hath tied all men of years and discretion to this way, therefore we of our own heads shall carry infants to him that way without his direction: the conceit is poor and low, and the action consequent to it is too bold and venturesome, "I have nothing to do but with my own religion and that of my household:" *mysterium meum mihi et filiis domus meæ*: let him do what he please to infants, we must not.

Only this is certain, that God hath as great care of infants as of others, and because they have no capacity of doing such acts as may be in order to acquiring salvation, God will by his own immediate mercy bring them thither where he hath

intended them ; but to say that therefore he will do it by an external act and ministry, and that confined to a particular, viz. This rite and no other, is no good argument, unless God could not do it without such means, or that he had said he would not : and why cannot God as well do his mercies to infants now immediately, as he did before the institution either of circumcision or baptism ?

However, there is no danger that infants should perish for want of this external ministry, much less for prevaricating Christ's precept of " unless a man be born again, &c." *Nisi quis renatus fuerit, &c.* For first, the water and the spirit in this place signify the same thing ; and by water is meant the effect of the spirit, cleansing and purifying the soul, as appears in its parallel place of Christ baptizing with the spirit and with fire. For although this was literally fulfilled in Pentecost, yet morally there is more in it, for it is the sign of the effect of the Holy Ghost, and his productions upon the soul ; and it was an excellency of our blessed Saviour's office, that he baptizes *all* that come to him with the Holy Ghost and with fire ; for so St. John preferring Christ's mission and office before his own, tells the Jews, not Christ's disciples, that Christ shall baptize them with fire and the Holy Spirit, that is, *all that come to him*, as John the Baptist did with water, for so lies the antithesis : and you may as well conclude, that infants must also pass through the fire as through the water. And that we may not think this a trick to elude the pressure of this place, Peter says the same thing ; for when he had said that baptism saves us, he adds by way of explication, *not the washing of the flesh, but the*

confidence of a good conscience towards God; plainly saying that it is not water, or the purifying of the body, but the cleansing of the spirit, that does that which is supposed to be the effect of baptism; and if our Saviour's exclusive negative be expounded by analogy to this of Peter, as certainly the other parallel instance must, and this may, then it will be so far from proving the necessity of infants' baptism, that it can conclude for no man that he is obliged to the rite; and the doctrine of the baptism is only to derive from the very words of institution, and not be forced from words which were spoken before it was ordained. But to let pass this advantage, and to suppose it meant of external baptism, yet this no more infers a necessity of infants' baptism, than the other words of Christ infer a necessity to give them the holy communion, "unless ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven;"* and yet we do not think these words sufficient argument to communicate them; if men therefore will do us justice, either let them give both sacraments to infants, as some ages of the church did, or neither. For the wit of man is not able to shew a disparity in the sanction, or in the energy of its expression. And therefore they were honest that understood the obligation to be parallel, and performed it accordingly, and yet because we say they were deceived in one instance, and yet the obligation (all the world cannot reasonably say but) is the same; they are as honest and as reasonable that do neither. And since the ancient church

* John vi. 53.

did with an equal opinion of necessity give them the communion, and yet men now-a-days do not; why shall men be more burdened with a prejudice and a name of obloquy, for not giving the infants one sacrament more than they are disliked for not affording them the other. If Anabaptist shall be a name of disgrace, why shall not some other name be invented for them that deny to communicate infants, which shall be equally disgraceful; or else both the opinions signified by such names, be accounted no disparagement, but receive their estimate according to their truth?

Of which truth, since we are now taking account from pretences of Scripture, it is considerable that the discourse of St. Peter, which is pretended for the entitling infants to the promise of the Holy Ghost, and by consequence to baptism, which is supposed to be its instrument and conveyance, is wholly a fancy, and hath in it nothing of certainty or demonstration, and not much probability. For besides that the thing itself is unreasonable, and the Holy Ghost works by the heightening and improving our natural faculties; and therefore is a promise that so concerns them, as they are reasonable creatures, and may have a title to it, in proportion to their nature, but no possession or reception of it, till their faculties come into act; besides this, I say, the words mentioned in St. Peter's sermon (which are the only record of the promise) are interpreted upon a weak mistake: the promise belongs to you and to your children, therefore infants are actually receptive of it in that capacity. That is the argument; but the reason of it is not yet discovered, nor ever will, for *to you and your children*, is to you and your posterity; to you and your

children when they are of the same capacity, in which you are effectually receptive of the promise : but he that whenever the word *children* is used in Scripture, shall by *children* understand infants, must needs believe that in all Israel there were no men, but all were infants ; and if that had been true, it had been the greater wonder they should overcome the Anakims and beat the king of Moab, and march so far, and discourse so well, for they were all called the children of Israel.

And for the allegation of St. Paul that infants are holy, if their parents be faithful, it signifies nothing, but that they are holy by designation, just as Jeremiah and John the Baptist were sanctified in their mother's womb, that is, they were appointed and designed for holy ministries ; but had not received the promise of the Father, the gift of the Holy Ghost, for all that sanctification ; and just so the children of Christian parents are sanctified, that is designed to the service of Jesus Christ, and the future participation of the promises.

And as the promise appertains not (for ought appears) to infants in that capacity and consistence, but only by the title of their being reasonable creatures, and when they come to that act of which by nature they have the faculty ; so if it did, yet baptism is not the means of conveying the Holy Ghost. For that which Peter says, *be baptized, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost*, signifies no more than this : first, be baptized, and then by imposition of the Apostles' hands (which was another mystery and rite,) ye shall receive the promise of the Father : and this is nothing but an insinuation of the rite of confirmation, as is to this sense expounded by divers ancient

authors, and in ordinary ministry, the effect of it is not bestowed upon any unbaptized persons ; for it is in order next after baptism ; and upon this ground, Peter's argument in the case of Cornelius was concluding enough " from the greater to the less," *à majori ad minus* : thus the Holy Ghost was bestowed upon him and his family, which gift, by ordinary ministry, was consequent to baptism, (not as the effect is to the cause or to the proper instrument, but as a consequent is to an antecedent in a chain of causes accidentally and by positive institution depending upon each other) God by that miracle did give testimony, that the persons of the men were in great dispositions towards heaven, and therefore were to be admitted to those rites, which are the ordinary inlets into the kingdom of heaven. But then from hence to argue that wherever there is a capacity of receiving the same grace, there also the same sign is to be ministered, and from hence, to infer pædobaptism, is an argument very fallacious upon several grounds. First, because baptism is not the sign of the Holy Ghost, but by another mystery it was conveyed ordinarily, and extraordinarily it was conveyed independently from any mystery, and so the argument goes upon a wrong supposition. Secondly, if the supposition were true, the proposition built upon it is false ; for they that are capable of the same grace, are not always capable of the same sign ; for women under the law of Moses, although they were capable of the righteousness of faith, yet they were not capable of the sign of circumcision : for God does not always convey his graces in the same manner, but to some mediately, to others immediately ; and there is no better instance in the world of it, than the gift of

the Holy Ghost (which is the thing now instanced in this contestation) for it is certain in Scripture, that it was ordinarily given by imposition of hands, and that after baptism; (and when this came into an ordinary ministry, it was called by the ancient church chrism or confirmation) but yet it was given sometimes without imposition of hands, as at Pentecost, and to the family of Cornelius; sometimes before baptism, sometimes after, sometimes in conjunction with it.

And after all this, lest these arguments should not ascertain their cause, they fall on complaining against God, and will not be content with God, unless they may baptize their children, but take exceptions that God did more for the children of the Jews. But why so? Because God made a covenant with their children actually as infants, and consigned it by circumcision: well; so he did with our children too in their proportion. He made a covenant of spiritual promises on his part, and spiritual and real services on ours; and this pertains to children when they are capable, but made with them as soon as they are alive, and yet not so as with the Jews' babes; for as their rite consigned them actually, so it was a national and temporal blessing and covenant; as a separation of them from the portion of the nations, a marking them for a peculiar people, (and therefore while they were in the wilderness, and separate from the commixture of all people, they were not at all circumcised) but as that rite did seal the righteousness of faith, so by virtue of its adherency, and remanency in their flesh, it did that work when the children came to age. But in Christian infants the case is otherwise; for the new covenant being established upon better promises, is not only

to better purposes, but also in distinct manner to be understood ; when their spirits are as receptive of a spiritual act or impress as the bodies of Jewish children were of the sign of circumcision, then it is to be consigned : but this business is quickly at an end, by saying that God hath done no less for our's, than for their children ; for he will do the mercies of a Father and Creator to them, and he did no more to the other ; but he hath done more to our's ; for he hath made a covenant with them, and built it upon promises of the greatest concernment ; he did not so to them : but then for the other part, which is the main of the argument, that unless this mercy be consigned by baptism, as good not at all in respect of us, because we want the comfort of it ; this is the greatest vanity in the world : for when God hath made a promise pertaining also to our children (for so our adversaries contend, and we also acknowledge in its true sense) shall not this promise, this Word of God be of sufficient truth, certainty, and efficacy to cause comfort, unless we tempt God and require a sign of him ? May not Christ say to these men, as sometimes to the Jews, *a wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, but no sign shall be given unto it* ? But the truth of it is, this argument is nothing but a direct quarrelling with God Almighty.

Now since there is no strength in the doctrinal part, the practice and precedents apostolical and ecclesiastical, will be of less concernment, if they were true as is pretended, because actions apostolical are not always rules for ever ; it might be fit for them to do it “ for the place and time,” *pro loco et tempore*, as divers others of their institutions, but yet no engagement past thence upon

following ages ; for it might be convenient at that time, in the new spring of Christianity, and till they had engaged a considerable party, by that means to make them parties against the Gentiles' superstition, and by way of pre-occupation, to ascertain them to their own sect when they came to be men ; or for some other reason not transmitted to us, because the question of fact itself is not sufficiently determined. For the insinuation of that precept of baptizing *all nations*, of which children certainly are a part, does as little advantage as any of the rest, because other parallel expressions of Scripture do determine and expound themselves to a sense that includes not all persons absolutely, but of a capable condition, as "worship him all ye nations, praise the Lord all ye people of the earth," and divers more.

As for the conjecture concerning the family of Stephanus, at the best it is but a conjecture, and besides that it is not proved that there were children in the family ; yet if that were granted, it follows not that they were baptized, because by *whole families*, in Scripture, is meant all persons of reason and age within the family ; for it is said, of the ruler at Capernaum,† *that he believed and all his house* : now you may also suppose that in his house were little babes, that is likely enough, and you may suppose that they did believe too before they could understand, but that is not so likely ; and then the argument from baptizing of Stephanus' household, may be allowed just as probable : but this is unman-like to build upon such slight airy conjectures.

But tradition by all means must supply the

* John 4.

place of Scripture, and there is pretended a tradition apostolical, that infants were baptized: but at this we are not much moved; for we who rely upon the written Word of God as sufficient to establish all true religion, do not value the allegation of traditions: and however the world goes, none of the reformed churches can pretend this argument against this opinion, because they who reject tradition when it is against them, must not pretend it at all for them: but if we should allow the topic to be good, yet how will it be verified? for so far as it can yet appear, it relies wholly upon the testimony of Origen, for from him Austin had it. Now a tradition apostolical, if it be not consigned with a fuller testimony than of one person whom all after-ages have condemned of many errors, will obtain so little reputation amongst those who know that things have upon greater authority pretended to derive from the Apostles, and yet falsely, that it will be a great argument that he is credulous and weak, that shall be determined by so weak probation in matters of so great concernment. And the truth of the business is, as there was no command of Scripture to oblige children to the susception of it, so the necessity of pædo-baptism was not determined in the church till in the eighth age after Christ, but in the year 418, in the Milevitan council, a provincial of Africa, there was a canon made for pædo-baptism; never till then! I grant it was practised in Africa before that time, and they or some of them thought well of it, and though that be no argument for us to think so, yet none of them did ever before pretend it to be necessary, none to have been a precept of the gospel. St.

Austin was the first that ever preached it to be absolutely necessary, and it was in his heat and anger against Pelagius, who had warmed and chafed him so in that question, that it made him innovate in other doctrines possibly of more concernment than this. And that although this was practised anciently in Africa, yet that it was without an opinion of necessity, and not often there, not at all in other places, we have the testimony of a learned pædo-baptist, Ludovicus Vives, who in his annotations upon St. Austin,* affirms, “anciently, no one but a grown up person was baptized.”†

But besides that the tradition cannot be proved to be apostolical; we have very good evidence from antiquity, that it was the opinion of the primitive church, that infants ought not to be baptized; and this is clear in the sixth canon of the council of Neocæsarea, the sense of the words is this; ‘A woman with child may be baptized when she please; for her baptism concerns not the child.’‡ The reason of the connexion of the parts of that canon is in the following words, because every one in that confession is to give a demonstration of his own choice and election: meaning plainly, that if the baptism of the mother did also pass upon the child, it were not fit for a pregnant woman to receive baptism, because in that sacrament there being a confession of faith, which confession supposes understanding

* De Civit. Dei. l. l. c. 27.

† Neminem nisi adultum antiquitùs solere baptizari.

‡ Περὶ κυοφορήσεως ὅτι δεῖ φωτίζεσθαι ὅποτε βάλεται· ἐδὲν γὰρ κοινωνεῖ ἢ τίκτησα τῷ τικτομένῳ. διὰ τὸ ἐκάστω ἰδίαν τὴν προαίρεσιν τὴν ἐν τῇ ὁμολογίᾳ δέικνυσθαι.

and free choice, it is not reasonable the child should be consigned with such a mystery, since it cannot do any act of choice or understanding: the canon speaks reason, and it intimates a practice which was absolutely universal in the church, of interrogating the catechumens concerning the articles of creed: which is one argument that either they did not admit infants to baptism, or that they did prevaricate egregiously in asking questions of them, who themselves knew were not capable of giving answer.

And to supply their incapacity by the answer of a godfather, is but the same unreasonableness acted with a worse circumstance: and there is no sensible account can be given of it; for that which some imperfectly murmur concerning stipulations civil performed by tutors in the name of their pupils, is an absolute vanity: for what, if by positive constitution of the Romans, such solemnities of law are required in all stipulations, and by indulgence are permitted in the case of a notable benefit accruing to minors, must God be tied, and Christian religion transact her mysteries by proportion and compliance with the law of the Romans? I know God might, if he would have appointed godfathers to give answer in behalf of the children, and to be fidejussors for them; but we cannot find any authority or ground that he hath, and if he had, then it is to be supposed he would have given them commission to have transacted the solemnity with better circumstances, and given answers with more truth.* For the

* “ Why is it not necessary (so Junius in his notes upon Tertullian) to bring sponsors into danger, since they may fail of fulfilling their promises by death, or may be deceived by the prevalence of a

question is asked of believing in the present. And if the godfathers answer in the name of the child, *I do believe*, it is notorious they speak false and ridiculously; for the infant is not capable of believing, and if he were, he were also capable of dissenting, and how then do they know his mind? And therefore Tertullian gives advice that the baptism of infants should be deferred till they could give an account of their faith; † and the same also is the council of Gregory, ‡ bishop of Nazianzum, although he allows them to hasten it in case of necessity; for though his reason taught him what was fit, yet he was overborn with the practice and opinion of his age, which began to bear too violently upon him, and yet in another place he makes mention of some to whom baptism was not administered διὰ νηπιότητα, by reason of infancy; to which, if we add, that the parents of St. Austin, St. Jerome, and St. Ambrose, although they were Christian, yet did not baptize their children before they were 30 years of age, it will be very considerable in the example, and of great efficacy for destroying the supposed necessity or derivation from the Apostles.

wicked disposition.' Quid ni necesse est (sic legit Franc. Junius in notis ad Tertul.) sponsors etiam periculo ingeri qui et ipsi per mortalitatem destituere promissiones suas possint, et proventu malæ indolis falli? Tertul. lib. de baptis. cap. 18.

† “It is best to delay baptism, particularly of little children, on account of their condition, disposition and age. Let them be esteemed Christians when they are able to know Christ.” Lib. de baptis. prope finem, cap. 18. itaque pro personæ cujusque conditione ac dispositione, etiam ætate, cunctatio baptismi utilior est, præcipuè tamen circa parvulos....Fiant Christiani cum Christum nosse potuerint.

‡ Orat. 40. quæst in S. Baptisma.

But however, it is against the perpetual analogy of Christ's doctrine to baptize infants : for besides that Christ never gave any precept to baptize them, nor ever himself nor his Apostles (that appears) did baptize any of them ; all that either he or his Apostles said concerning it, requires such previous dispositions to baptism of which infants are not capable, and these are faith and repentance : and not to instance in those innumerable places that require faith before this sacrament, there needs no more but this one saying of our blessed Saviour,* *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned* ; plainly thus, faith and baptism in conjunction will bring a man to heaven ; but if he have not faith, baptism shall do him no good. So that if baptism be necessary, then, so is faith, and much more ; for want of faith damns absolutely ; it is not said so of the want of baptism. Now if this decretory sentence be to be understood of persons of age, and if children by such an answer (which indeed is reasonable enough) be excused from the necessity of faith, the want of which regularly does damn, then it is sottish to say the same incapacity of reason and faith shall not excuse from the actual susception of baptism, which is less necessary, and to which faith and many other acts are necessary predispositions when it is reasonably and humanly received. The conclusion is, that baptism is also to be deferred till the time of faith : and whether infants have faith or no, is a question to be disputed by persons that care not how much they say, nor how little they prove.

* Mar. 16.

1. Personal and actual faith they have none ; for they have no acts of understanding ; and besides how can any man know that they have, since he never saw any sign of it, neither was he told so by any one that could tell ? 2. Some say they have imputative faith ; but then so let the sacrament be too, that is, if they have the parent's faith or the church's, then so let baptism be imputed also by derivation from them, that as in their mother's womb, and while they hang on their breasts, they live upon their mother's nourishment, so they may upon the baptism of their parents or their mother the church. For since faith is necessary to the susception of baptism (and they themselves confess it by striving to find out new kinds of faith to daub the matter up) such as the faith is, such must be the sacrament : for there is no proportion between an actual sacrament and an imputative faith, this being in immediate and necessary order to that : and whatsoever can be said to take off from the necessity of actual faith, all that and much more may be said to excuse from the actual susception of baptism. 3. The first of these devices was that of Luther and his scholars, the second of Calvin and his ; and yet there is a third device which the church of Rome teaches, and that is, that infants have habitual faith : but who told them so ? how can they prove it ? what revelation or reason teaches any such thing ? Are they by this habit so much as disposed to an actual belief without a new master ? Can an infant sent into a Mahometan province be more confident for Christianity when he comes to be a man, than if he had not been baptized ? Are there any acts precedent, concomitant or consequent to this pre-

tended habit? This strange invention is absolutely without art, without Scripture, reason, or authority: but the men are to be excused unless there were a better; but for all these stratagems, the argument now alledged against the baptism of infants is demonstrative and unanswerable.

To which also this consideration may be added, that if baptism be necessary to the salvation of infants, upon whom is the imposition laid? To whom is the command given? To the parents or to the children? Not to the children, for they are not capable of a law; not to the parents, for then God hath put the salvation of innocent babes into the power of others; and infants may be damned for their fathers' carelessness or malice. It follows that it is not necessary at all to be done to them, to whom it cannot be prescribed as a law, and in whose behalf it cannot be reasonably intrusted to others with the appendant necessity; and if it be not necessary, it is certain it is not reasonable, and most certain it is no where in terms prescribed, and therefore it is to be presumed, that it ought to be understood and administered according as other precepts are, with reference to the capacity of the subject and the reasonableness of the thing.

For I consider, that the baptizing of infants does rush us upon such inconveniencies, which in other questions we avoid like rocks, which will appear if we discourse thus.

Either baptism produces spiritual effects, or it produces them not: if it produces not any, why is such contention about it, what are we the nearer heaven if we are baptized? And if it be neglected, what are we the farther off? But if (as without all peradventure all the Pædo-baptists will say)

baptism does do a work upon the soul, producing spiritual benefits and advantages, these advantages are produced by the external work of the Sacrament alone, or by that as it is helped by the co-operation and predispositions of the *suscipient*.

If by the external work of the sacrament alone, how does this differ from the *opus operatum* of the Papists, save that it is worse? For they say the sacrament does not produce its effect but in a *suscipient* disposed by all requisites and due preparatives of piety, faith, and repentance; though in a subject so disposed, they say, the sacrament by its own virtue does it; but this opinion says it does it of itself without the help, or so much as the coexistence of any condition but the mere reception.

But if the sacrament does not do its work alone, but *per modum recipientis* according to the predispositions of the *suscipient*, then, because infants can neither hinder it, nor do any thing to further it, it does them no benefit at all. And if any man runs for succour to that exploded κρησφυγετόν, that infants have faith, or any other inspired habit of I know not what or how, we desire no more advantage in the world, than that they are constrained to an answer without revelation, against reason, common sense, and all the experience in the world.

The sum of the argument in short, is this, though under another representment.

Either baptism is a mere ceremony, or it implies a *duty* on our part. If it be a ceremony only, how does it sanctify us, or *make the comers thereunto perfect*? If it implies a duty on our part, how then can children receive it, who cannot do duty at all?

And indeed, this way of ministration makes baptism to be wholly an outward duty, a work of the law, a carnal ordinance ; it makes us adhere to the letter, without regard of the spirit, to be satisfied with shadows, to return to bondage, to relinquish the mysteriousness, the substance and spirituality of the gospel. Which argument is of so much the more consideration, because under the spiritual covenant, or the gospel of grace, if *the mystery* goes not before the *symbol* (which it does when the symbols are seals and consignations of the grace, as it is said the sacraments are) yet it always accompanies it, but never follows in order of time : and this is clear in the perpetual analogy of holy Scripture.

For baptism is never propounded, mentioned or enjoined as a means of remission of sins, or of eternal life, but something of duty, choice and sanctity is joined with it, in order to production of the end so mentioned, “ *Know ye not that as many as are baptized into Christ Jesus, are baptized into his death?* ”* There is the mystery and the symbol together, and declared to be perpetually united, ὅσοι ἐβαπτίσθημεν. All of us who were baptized into one, were baptized into the other, not only into the name of Christ, but into his death also : but the meaning of this as it is explained in the following words of St. Paul, makes much for our purpose : for to be baptized into his death, signifies “ *To be buried with him in baptism, that as Christ rose from the dead, we also should walk in newness of life:* ”† That is the full mystery of baptism ; for being baptized into his death, or which is all one in the next words, “ ἐν ὁμοιώματι

* Rom. vi. 3.

† Verse 4.

τὸ θανάτου αὐτοῦ “*Into the likeness of his death,*” * cannot go alone ; If we be so planted into Christ, we shall be partakers of his resurrection, and that is not here instanced in precise *reward*, but in *exact duty*, for all this is nothing but “*crucifixion of the old man, a destroying the body of sin, that we no longer serve sin.*” †

This indeed is truly to be baptized both in the symbol and the mystery : whatsoever is less than this, is but the symbol only, a *mere ceremony*, an *opus operatum*, a dead letter, an empty shadow, an instrument without an agent to manage, or force to actuate it.

Plainer yet : “*Whosoever are baptized into Christ have put on Christ, have put on the new man :*” but to put on this new man, is “*To be formed in righteousness, and holiness, and truth :*” this whole argument is the very words of St. Paul. The major proportion is dogmatically determined, Gal. iii. 27. The minor in Ephes. iv. 24. The conclusion then is obvious, that they who are not formed new “*In righteousness, and holiness, and truth,*” they who remaining in the present incapacities cannot “*walk in newness of life,*” they have not been “*baptized into Christ,*” and then they have but one member of the distinction, used by St. Peter, they have that baptism “*Which is a putting away the filth of the flesh ;*” but they have not that baptism “*Which is the answer of a good conscience towards God,*” ‡ which is the only “*baptism that saves us :*” and this is the case of children ; and then the case is thus.

* Verse 5.

† Verse 6.

‡ 1 Pet. iii. 21.

As infants by the force of nature cannot put themselves into a supernatural condition, (and therefore say the Pædo-baptists, they need baptism to put them into it :) so if they be baptized before the use of reason, before the "*works of the Spirit*," before the operations of grace, before they can throw off "*The works of darkness, and live in righteousness and newness of life*," they are never the nearer: from the pains of hell they shall be saved by the mercies of God and their own innocence, though they die *in puris naturalibus*, and baptism will carry them no further. For that baptism that saves us, is not the only washing with water, of which only children are capable, but the answer of a good conscience towards God, of which they are not capable till the use of reason, till they know to choose the good and refuse the evil.

And from thence I consider anew, that all vows made by persons under others' names, stipulations made by minors, are not valid, till they by a supervening act, after they are of sufficient age, do ratify them. Why then may not infants as well make the vow *de novo*, as *de novo* ratify that which was made for them *ab antiquo* when they come to years of choice? If the *infant* vow be invalid till the *manly* confirmation, * why were it not as good they staid to make it till that time, before which, if they do make it, it is to no purpose? This would be considered.

And in conclusion, our way is the surer way, for not to baptize children till they can give an account of their faith, is the most proportionable to an act of reason and humanity, and it can have

* Vide Erasmus in præfat. ad Annotat. in Matth.

no danger in it: for to say that infants may be damned for want of baptism, (a thing which is not in their power to acquire, they being persons not yet capable of a law) is to affirm that of God which we dare not say of any wise and good man. Certainly it is much derogatory to God's justice and a plain defiance to the infinite reputation of his goodness.

And therefore, whoever will pertinaciously persist in this opinion of the Pædo-baptists and practise it accordingly, they pollute the blood of the everlasting testament, they dishonour and make a pageantry of the sacrament, they ineffectually represent a sepulture into the death of Christ, and please themselves in a sign without effect, making baptism like the fig-tree in the gospel, full of leaves but no fruit; and they invoke the Holy Ghost in vain, doing as if one should call upon him to illuminate a stone, or a tree.

Thus far the Anabaptists may argue, and men have disputed against them with so much weakness and confidence, that they have been encouraged in their error more by the accidental advantages we have given them by our weak arguings,* than by any truth of their cause, or excellency of their wit. But the use I make of it as to our present question is this: that since there is no direct impiety in the opinion, nor any that is apparently consequent to it, and they with so much probability do or may pretend to true per-

* "Not that there is any force in their statements, but they derive it from our weakness." *ἐκ ἐν τοῖς ἑαυτῶν δόγμασι τὴν ἰσχὺν ἔχοντες, ἀλλ' ἐν τοῖς ἡμετέρων σαθροῖς ταύτην θηρούοντες*, as Nazianzen observes of the case of the church in his time.

suasion, they are with all means, Christian, fair, and human, to be redargued, or instructed, but if they cannot be persuaded they must be left to God, who knows every degree of every man's understanding, all his weaknesses and strengths, what impress each argument makes upon his spirit, and how irresistible every reason is, and he alone judges his innocency and sincerity; and for the question, I think there is so much to be pretended against that which I believe to be the truth, that there is much more truth then evidence on our side, and therefore we may be confident as for our own particulars, but not too forward peremptorily to prescribe to others, much less damn, or to kill, or to persecute them that only in this particular disagree.

SECTION XIX.

That there may be no Toleration of Doctrines inconsistent with piety or the public good.

BUT then for their other capital opinion, with all its branches, that it is not lawful for princes to put malefactors to death, nor to take up defensive arms, nor to minister an oath, nor to contend in judgment, it is not to be disputed with such Liberty as the former: for although it be part of that doctrine which Clemens Alexandrinus says was delivered, "by private tradition from the apostles that it is not allowable for Christians to go to law,

neither before the heathen, nor the saints, and that a righteous man ought not to take an oath ;” * and the other part seems to be warranted by the eleventh canon of the Nicene council, which enjoins penance to them that take arms after their conversion to Christianity ; yet either these authorities are to be slighted, or be made receptive of any interpretation rather than the common wealth be disarmed of its necessary supports, and all laws made ineffectual and impertinent : for the interest of the republic, and the well-being of bodies politic is not to depend upon the nicety of our imaginations, or the fancies of any peevish or mistaken priests ; and there is no reason a prince should ask *John-a-Brunck*, whether his understanding will give him leave to reign, and be a king : nay, suppose there were divers places of Scripture which did seemingly restrain the political use of the sword, yet since the avoiding a personal inconvenience, hath by all men been accounted sufficient reason to expound scripture to any sense rather than the literal, which infers an unreasonable inconvenience, (and therefore the *pulling out an eye*, and the *cutting off a hand*, is expounded by mortifying a vice, and killing a criminal habit) much rather must the allegations against the power of the sword endure any sense rather than it should be thought that Christianity should destroy that which is the only instrument of justice, the restraint of vice and support of bodies politic. It is certain that Christ and his apostles, and Christian religion did comply with the most ab-

* Per seeretam traditionem apostolorum, non licere Christianis contendere in Judicio, nec coram gentibus, nec coram sanctis, et perfectum non debere Jurare. L. 7. Stromat.

solute government, and the most imperial that was then in the world; and it could not have been at all endured in the world if it had not; for indeed the world itself could not last in regular and orderly communities of men, but be a perpetual confusion, if princes and the supreme power in bodies politic, were not armed with a coercive power to punish malefactors: the public necessity, and universal experience of all the world convinces those men of being most unreasonable, that make such pretences which destroy all laws, and all communities, and the bands of civil societies, and leave it arbitrary to every vain or vicious person whether men shall be safe, or laws be established, or a murderer hanged, or princes rule. So that in this case men are not so much to dispute with particular arguments, as to consider the interest and concernment of kingdoms and public societies: for the religion of Jesus Christ is the best establisher of the felicity of private persons, and of public communities; it is a religion that is prudent and innocent, human and reasonable, and brought infinite advantages to mankind, but no inconvenience, nothing that is unnatural, or unsociable, or unjust. And if it be certain that this world cannot be governed without laws, and laws without a compulsory signify nothing, then it is certain, that it is no good religion that teaches doctrine whose consequents will destroy all government; and therefore it is as much to be rooted out, as any thing that is the greatest pest and nuisance to the public interest: and that we may guess at the purposes of the men, and the inconvenience of such doctrine; these men that did first intend by their doctrine to disarm all princes, and bodies politic, did themselves take up arms to establish

their wild, and impious fancy ; and indeed that prince or commonwealth that should be persuaded by them, would be exposed to all the insolencies of foreigners, and all mutinies of the teachers themselves, and the governors of the people could not do that duty they owe to their people of protecting them from the rapine and malice which will be in the world as long as the world is. And therefore, here they are to be restrained from preaching such doctrine, if they mean to preserve their government, and the necessity of the thing will justify the lawfulness of the thing : if they think it to themselves, that cannot be helped ; so long it is innocent as much as concerns the public ; but if they preach it, they may be accounted authors of all the consequent inconveniences, and punished accordingly : *no doctrine that destroys government is to be endured* ; for although those doctrines are not always good that serve the private ends of princes, or the secret designs of state, which by reason of some accidents or imperfections of men may be promoted by that which is false and pretending, yet no doctrine can be good that does not comply with the formality of government itself, and the well-being of bodies politic ; “Cato, when an augur, ventured to say that what comported with the public good was the best augury and what was contrary to the public good the reverse.” * Religion is to to meliorate the condition of a people, not to do it disadvantage, and therefore those doctrines that inconvenience the public, are no parts of good religion ; “that the state may be safe,” *ut respub.*

* Augur cum esset Cato, dicere ausus est, optimis auspiciis ea geri quæ pro reipub. salute gererentur ; quæ contra rempub. fierent contra auspicia fieri. Cicero de senectute.

salva fit, is a necessary consideration in the permission of Propheesyings; for according to the true, solid, and prudent ends of the republic, so is the doctrine to be permitted or restrained, and the men that preach it according as they are good subjects, and right commonwealth's-men: for religion is a thing superinduced to temporal government, and the church is an addition of a capacity to a commonwealth, and therefore is in no sense to disserve the necessity and just interests of that to which it is superadded for its advantage and conservation.

And thus by a proportion to the rules of these instances, all their other doctrines are to have their judgment, as concerning toleration or restraint; for all are either speculative or practical, they are consistent with the public ends or inconsistent, they teach impiety or they are innocent, and they are to be permitted or rejected accordingly. For in the question of toleration, the foundation of faith, good life and government is to be secured; in all other cases, the former considerations are effectual.

SECTION XX.

How far the Religion of the Church of Rome is Tolerable.

BUT now concerning the religion of the church of Rome (which was the other instance I promised to consider) we will proceed another way, and not consider the truth or falsity of the doctrines; for

that is not the best way to determine this question concerning permitting their religion or assemblies ; because that a thing is not true, is not argument sufficient to conclude that he that believes it true is not to be endured ; but we are to consider what inducements there are that possess the understanding of those men ; whether they be reasonable and innocent, sufficient to abuse or persuade wise and good men, or whether the doctrines be commenced upon design, and managed with impiety, and then have effects not to be endured.

And here first, I consider that those doctrines that have had long continuance and possession in the church, cannot easily be supposed in the present professors to be a design, since they have received it from so many ages, and it is not likely that all ages should have the same purposes, or that the same doctrine should serve the several ends of divers ages. But however, long prescription is a prejudice oftentimes so insupportable, that it cannot with many arguments be retrenched, as relying upon these grounds, that truth is more ancient than falsehood, that God would not for so many ages forsake his church, and leave her in an error ; that whatsoever is new, is not only suspicious, but false ; which are suppositions, pious and plausible enough. And if the church of Rome had communicated infants so long as she hath prayed to saints, or baptized infants, the communicating would have been believed with as much confidence as the other articles are, and the dissentients with as much impatience rejected. But this consideration is to be enlarged upon all those particulars, which as they are apt to abuse the persons of the men, and amuse their understandings, so they are instruments of their excuse, and

by making their errors to be invincible, and their opinions, though false, yet not criminal, make it also to be an effect of reason and charity, to permit the men a Liberty of their conscience, and let them answer to God for themselves and their own opinions: such as are the beauty and splendor of their church; their pompous service; the stateliness and solemnity of the hierarchy; their name of Catholic, which they suppose their own due, and to concern no other sect of Christians; the antiquity of many of their doctrines; the continual succession of their bishops; their immediate derivation from the Apostles; their title to succeed St. Peter; the supposal and pretence of his personal prerogatives; the advantages which the conjunction of the imperial seat with their episcopal hath brought to that see; the flattering expressions of minor bishops, which by being old records, have obtained credibility; the multitude and variety of people which are of their persuasion; apparent consent with antiquity in many ceremonials which other churches have rejected; and a pretended, and sometimes an apparent consent with some elder ages in many matters doctrinal; the advantage which is derived to them by entertaining some personal opinions of the fathers, which they with infinite clamors see to be cried up to be a doctrine of the church of that time; the great consent of one part with another in that which most of them affirm to be "concerning the faith," *de fide*; the great differences which are commenced amongst their adversaries, abusing the Liberty of Propheying unto a very great licentiousness; their happiness of being instruments in converting divers nations; the advantages of monarchical government, the benefit of which as

well as the inconveniences (which though they feel they consider not) they daily do enjoy; the piety and the austerity of their religious orders of men and women; the single life of their priests and bishops; the riches of their church; the severity of their fasts and their exterior observances; the great reputation of their first bishops for faith and sanctity; the known holiness of some of those persons whose institutes the religious persons pretend to imitate; their miracles false or true, substantial or imaginary; the casualties and accidents that have happened to their adversaries, which being chances of humanity, are attributed to several causes according as the fancies of men and their interests are pleased or satisfied; the temporal felicity of their professors; the oblique arts and indirect proceedings of some of those who departed from them; and amongst many other things, the names of heretic and schismatic, which they with infinite pertinacy fasten upon all that disagree from them; these things and divers others may very easily persuade persons of much reason and more piety, to retain that which they know to have been the religion of their forefathers, which had actual possession and seizure of men's understandings before the opposite professions had a name; and so much the rather because religion hath more advantages upon the fancy and affections, than it hath upon philosophy and severe discourses, and therefore is the more easily persuaded upon such grounds as these, which are more apt to amuse than to satisfy the understanding.

Secondly, if we consider the doctrines themselves, we shall find them to be superstructures ill built, and worse managed, but yet they keep the

foundation, they build upon God in Jesus Christ, they profess the Apostles' creed, they retain faith and repentance as the supporters of all our hopes of heaven, and believe many more truths than can be proved to be of simple and original necessity to salvation: and therefore all the wisest personages of the adverse party allowed to them possibility of salvation, whilst their errors are not faults of their will, but weaknesses and deceptions of the understanding. So that there is nothing in the *foundation of faith*, that can reasonably hinder them to be permitted: the foundation of faith stands secure enough for all their vain and unhandsome superstructures.

But then on the other side, if we take account of their doctrines as they relate to good life, or are consistent or inconsistent with civil government, we shall have other considerations.

Thirdly, for I consider, that many of their doctrines do accidentally teach or lead to ill life, and it will appear to any man that considers the result of these propositions: attrition (which is a low and imperfect degree of sorrow for sin, or as others say a sorrow for sin commenced upon any reason of temporal hope, or fear or desire or any thing else) is a sufficient disposition for a man in the sacrament of penance to receive absolution, and be justified before God, by taking away the guilt of all his sins, and the obligation to eternal pains. So that already the fear of hell is quite removed upon conditions so easy, that many men take more pains to get a groat, than by this doctrine we are obliged to, for the curing and acquitting all the greatest sins of a whole life, of the most vicious person in the world: and but that they affright their people with a fear of purgatory,

or with the severity of penances, in case they will not venture for purgatory (for by their doctrine they may choose or refuse either) there would be nothing in their doctrine or discipline to impede and slacken their proclivity to sin ; but then they have as easy a cure for that too, with a little more charge sometimes, but most commonly with less trouble: for there are so many confraternities, so many privileged churches, altars, monasteries, cemetries, offices, festivals, and so free a concession of indulgences appendant to all these, and a thousand fine devices to take away the fear of purgatory, to commute or expiate penances, that in no sect of men, do they with more ease and cheapness reconcile a wicked life with the hopes of heaven, than in the Roman communion.

And indeed if men would consider things upon their true grounds, the church of Rome should be more reprov'd upon doctrines that infer ill life, than upon such as are contrariant to faith. For false superstructures do not always destroy faith ; but many of the doctrines they teach, if they were prosecuted to the utmost issue would destroy good life : and therefore my quarrel with the church of Rome is greater and stronger upon such points which are not usually considered, than it is upon the ordinary disputes, which have to no very great purpose so much disturbed Christendom : and I am more scandalized at her for teaching the sufficiency of attrition in the sacrament, for indulging penances so frequently, for remitting all discipline, for making so great a part of religion to consist in externals and ceremonials, for putting more force and energy, and exacting with more severity the commandments of men than the precepts of justice, and internal religion : lastly, besides many other things, for promising heaven

to persons after a wicked life, upon their impertinent cries and ceremonials transacted by the priest and the dying person: I confess I wish the zeal of Christendom were a little more active against these and the like doctrines, and that men would write and live more earnestly against them than as yet they have done.

But then what influence this just zeal is to have upon the persons of the professors is another consideration: for as the Pharisees did preach well and lived ill, and therefore were to be heard, not imitated: so if these men live well, though they teach ill, they are to be imitated not heard: their doctrines by all means, Christian and human, are to be discountenanced, but their persons tolerated *eatenus*; their profession and decrees to be rejected and condemned, but the persons to be permitted, because by their good lives they confute their doctrines, that is, they give evidence, that they think no evil to be consequent to such opinions, and if they did, that they live good lives, is argument sufficient that they would themselves cast the first stone against their own opinions, if they thought them guilty of such misdemeanors.

Fourthly, But if we consider their doctrines in relation to government, and public societies of men, then if they prove faulty, they are so much the more intolerable by how much the consequents are of greater danger and malice: such doctrines as these, the pope may dispense with all oaths taken to God or man: he may absolve subjects from their allegiance to their natural prince: faith is not to be kept with heretics: heretical princes may be slain by their subjects. These propositions are so deprest, and do so immediately communicate with matter, and the interests of men, that they are of the same con-

sideration with matters of fact, and are to be handled accordingly. To other doctrines ill life may be consequent; but the connection of the antecedent and the consequent is not (peradventure) perceived or acknowledged by him that believes the opinion with no greater confidence than he disavows the effect and issue of it. But in these, the ill effect is the direct profession and purpose of the opinion, and therefore the man and the man's opinion is to be dealt withal, just as the matter of fact is to be judged; for it is an immediate, a perceived, a direct event, and the very purpose of the opinion. Now these opinions are a direct overthrow to all human society, and mutual commerce, a destruction of government, and of the laws and duty and subordination which we owe to princes; and therefore those men of the church of Rome that do hold them, and preach them, cannot pretend to the excuses of innocent opinions, and hearty persuasion, to the weakness of humanity, and the difficulty of things; for God hath not left those truths which are necessary for conservation of public societies of men so intricate and obscure, but that every one that is honest and desirous to understand his duty, will certainly know that no Christian truth destroys a man's being sociable and a member of the body politic, co-operating to the conservation of the whole as well as of itself. However, if it might happen that men should sincerely err in such plain matters of fact (for there are fools enough in the world) yet if he hold his peace, no man is to persecute or punish him, for then it is mere opinion, which comes not under political cognizance, that is, that cognizance which only can punish corporeally; but if he preaches it, he is actually a traitor, or seditious, or

author of perjury, or a destroyer of human society, respectively to the nature of the doctrine; and the preaching such doctrines cannot claim the privilege and immunity of a mere opinion, because it is as much matter of fact, as any the actions of his disciples and confidants, and therefore in such cases is not to be permitted, but judged according to the nature of the effect it hath or may have upon the actions of men.

Fifthly: But lastly, in matters merely speculative, the case is wholly altered, because the body politic which only may lawfully use the sword, is not a competent judge of such matters which have not direct influence upon the body politic, or upon the lives and manners of men as they are parts of a community (not but that princes or judges temporal may have as much ability as others, but by reason of the incompetency of the authority;) and Gallio spoke wisely, when he discoursed thus to the Jews, "*If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness O ye Jews, reason would that I should hear you; but if it be a question of words, and names, and of your law, look ye to it, for I will be no judge of such matters.*"* the man spoke excellent reason; for the cognizance of these things did appertain to men of the other robe: but the ecclesiastical power, which only is competent to take notice of such questions, is not of capacity to use the temporal sword or corporeal inflictions: the mere doctrines and opinions of men are things spiritual, and therefore not cognizable by a temporal authority; and the ecclesiastical authority, which is to take cognizance is itself so spiritual, that it cannot inflict any punishment corporeal.

* Act. xviii, 14.

And it is not enough to say, that when the magistrate restrains the preaching such opinions, if any man preaches them he may be punished (and then it is not for his opinion but his disobedience that he is punished) for the temporal power ought not to restrain Prophesyings, where the public peace and interest is not certainly concerned. And therefore it is not sufficient to excuse him, whose law in that case being by an incompetent power made a scruple where there was no sin.

And under this consideration, come very many articles of the church of Rome, which are wholly speculative, which do not derive upon practice, which begin in the understanding and rest there, and have no influence upon life and government, but very accidentally, and by a great many removes, and therefore are to be considered only so far as to guide men in their persuasions, but have no effect upon the persons of men, their bodies, or their temporal condition: I instance in two; prayer for the dead, and the doctrine of transubstantiation, these two to be instead of all the rest.

For the first, this discourse is to suppose it false, and we are to direct our proceedings accordingly: and therefore I shall not need to urge with how many fair words and gay pretences, this doctrine is set off, apt either to cozen or instruct the conscience of the wisest according as it is true or false respectively. But we find (says the Romanist) in the history of the Maccabees, that the Jews did pray and make offerings for the dead (which also appears by other testimonies, and by their form of prayers still extant which they used in the captivity) it is very considerable, that since our blessed Saviour did reprove all the evil doc-

trines and traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees, and did argue concerning the dead and the resurrection against the Sadducees, yet he spake no word against this public practice, but left it as he found it, which he who came to declare to us all the will of his Father, would not have done, if it had not been innocent, pious and full of charity. To which by way of consociation, if we add that St. Paul did pray for Onesiphorus, "*That God would shew him a mercy in that day,*"* that is, according to the style of the New Testament, the day of Judgment: the result will be, that although it be probable, that Onesiphorus at that time was dead (because in his salutations he salutes his household, without naming him who was the *major domo*, against his custom of salutations in other places) yet besides this, the prayer was for such a blessing to him whose demonstration and reception could not be but after death; which implies clearly, that then there is a need of mercy, and by consequence the dead people even to the day of Judgment inclusively, are the subject of a misery, the object of God's mercy, and therefore fit to be commemorated in the duties of our piety and charity, and that we are to recommend their condition to God, not only to give them more glory, in the re-union, but to pity them to such purposes in which they need; which because they are not revealed to us in particular, it hinders us not in recommending the persons in particular to God's mercy, but should rather excite our charity and devotion: for it being certain that they have a need of mercy, and it being uncertain how

* 2 Tim. i, 18.

great their need is, it may concern the prudence of charity to be the more earnest as not knowing the greatness of their necessity.

And if there should be any uncertainty in these arguments, yet its having been the universal practice of the church of God in all places, and in all ages, till within these hundred years, it is a very great inducement for any member of the church to believe that in the first traditions of Christianity, and the institutions apostolical, there was nothing delivered against this practice, but very much to insinuate or enjoin it; because the practice of it was at the first, and was universal. And if any man shall doubt of this, he shews nothing but that he is ignorant of the records of the church, it being plain in Tertullian* and St. Cyprian,† (who were the eldest writers of the Latin church) that in their times it was *ab antiquo*, the custom of the church to pray for the souls of the faithful departed, in the dreadful mysteries: and it was an institution apostolical, (says one of them) and so transmitted to the following ages of the church, and when once it began upon slight and discontent to be contested against by Aërius, the man was presently condemned for a heretic, as appears in Epiphanius.

But I am not to consider the arguments for the doctrine itself, although the probability and fair pretence of them may help to excuse such persons who upon these or the like grounds do heartily believe it. But I am to consider that whether it be false or true, there is no manner of malice in it, and at the worst, it is but a wrong error upon

* De corona milit. c. 3. et de monogam. c. 10.

† Ep. 66.

the right side of charity, and concluded against by its adversaries upon the confidence of such arguments, which possibly are not so probable as the grounds pretended for it.

And if the same judgment might be made of any more of their doctrines, I think it were better men were not furious, in the condemning such questions which either they understood not upon the grounds of their proper arguments, or at least consider not, as subjected in the persons, and lessened by circumstances, by the innocency of the event, or other prudential considerations.

But the other article is harder to be judged of, and hath made greater stirs in Christendom, and hath been dashed at with more impetuous objections, and such as do more trouble the question of toleration. For if the doctrine of transubstantiation be false (as upon much evidence we believe it is) then it is accused of introducing idolatry, giving divine worship to a creature, adoring of bread and wine, and then comes in the precept of God to the Jews, that those prophets who persuaded to idolatry should be slain.

But here we must deliberate, for it is concerning the lives of men, and yet a little deliberation may suffice:* for idolatry is a forsaking the true God, and giving divine worship to a creature or to an idol, that is, to an imaginary god, who hath no foundation in essence or existence: and is that kind of superstition which by divines is called the superstition of an undue object: now it is evident that the object of their adoration (that which is represented to them in their minds, their thoughts, and purposes, and by which God principally if

* Deut. 13.

not solely takes estimate of human actions) in the blessed sacrament, is the only true and eternal God, hypostatically joined with his holy humanity, which humanity they believe actually present under the veil of the sacramental signs: and if they thought him not present, they are so far from worshipping the bread in this case, that themselves profess it to be idolatry to do so, which is a demonstration that their soul hath nothing in it that is idolatrical. If their confidence and fanciful opinion hath engaged them upon so great mistake (as without doubt it hath) yet the will hath nothing in it, but what is a great enemy to idolatry, "the only fire of hell is a man's own will and desires;" *et nihil ardet in inferno nisi propria voluntas*: and although they have done violence to all philosophy, and the reason of man, and undone and cancelled the principles of two or three sciences, to bring in this article, yet they have a divine revelation whose literal and grammatical sense, if that sense were intended, would warrant them to do violence to all the sciences in the circle; and indeed that transubstantiation is openly and violently against natural reason, is an argument to make them disbelieve, who believe the mystery of the trinity in all those niceties of explication which are in the school (and which now-a-days pass for the doctrine of the church) with as much violence to the principles of natural and supernatural philosophy, as can be imagined to be in the point of transubstantiation.

1. But for the article itself, we all say that Christ is there present some way or other extraordinary; and it will not be amiss to worship him at that time, when he gives himself to us in

so mysterious a manner, and with so great advantages ; especially since the whole office is a consociation of divers actions of religion and divine worship. Now in all opinions of those men who think it an act of religion to communicate and to offer ; a divine worship is given to Christ, and is transmitted to him by mediation of that action and that sacrament, and it is no more in the church of Rome, but that they differ and mistake infinitely in the manner of his presence ; which error is wholly seated in the understanding, and does not communicate with the will ; for all agree that the divinity and the humanity of the Son of God is the ultimate and adequate object of divine adoration, and that it is incommunicable to any creature whatsoever, and before they venture to pass an act of adoration, they believe the bread to be annihilated or turned into his substance who may lawfully be worshipped ; and they who have these thoughts, are as much enemies of idolatry, as they that understand better how to avoid that inconvenience which is supposed to be the crime, which they formally hate, and we materially avoid : this consideration was concerning the doctrine itself.

2. And now for any danger to men's persons for suffering such a doctrine, this I shall say, that if they who do it, are not formally guilty of idolatry, there is no danger that they whom they persuade to it should be guilty ; and what persons soever believe it to be idolatry, to worship the sacrament, while that persuasion remains will never be brought to it, there is no fear of that : and he that persuades them to do it by altering their persuasions and beliefs, does no hurt but altering the opinions of the men, and abusing their

understandings; but when they believe it to be no idolatry, then their so believing it is sufficient security from that crime which hath so great a tincture and residency in the will, that from thence only it hath its being criminal.

3. However, if it were idolatry, I think the precept of God to the Jews of killing false and idolatrous prophets will be no warrant for Christians so to do: for in the case of the apostles and the men of Samaria, when James and John would have called for fire to destroy them even as Elias did under Moses' law, Christ distinguished the spirit of Elias from his own spirit, and taught them a lesson of greater sweetness, and consigned this truth to all ages of the church, that such severity is not consistent with the meekness which Christ by his example and sermons hath made a precept evangelical: at most it was but a judicial law and no more of argument to make it necessary to us, then the Mosaical precepts of putting adulterers to death, and trying the accused persons by the waters of jealousy.

And thus in these two instances, I have given account what is to be done in toleration of diversity of opinions: the result of which is principally this: let the prince and the secular power have a care the commonwealth be safe. For whether such or such a sect of Christians be to be permitted is a question rather political than religious; for as for the concernments of religion, these instances have furnished us with sufficient to determine us in our duties as to that particular, and by one of these all particulars may be judged.

And now it were a strange inhumanity to permit Jews in a commonwealth, whose interest is served by their inhabitation, and yet upon equal

grounds of state and policy, not to permit differing sects of Christians: for although possibly there is more danger men's persuasions should be altered in a commixture of divers sects of Christians, yet there is not so much danger when they are changed from Christian to Christian, as if they be turned from Christian to Jew, as many are daily in Spain and Portugal.

And this is not to be excused by saying the church hath no power over them, "who are without," *qui foris sunt*, as Jews are: for it is true the church in the capacity of spiritual regiments hath nothing to do with them, because they are not her diocese: yet the prince hath to do with them, when they are subjects of his regiment: they may not be excommunicate any more than a stone may be killed, because they are not of the Christian communion, but they are living persons, parts of the commonwealth infinitely deceived in their religion, and very dangerous if they offer to persuade men to their opinions, and are the greatest enemies of Christ whose honour and the interest of whose service a Christian prince is bound with all his power to maintain. And when the question is of punishing disagreeing persons with death, the church hath equally nothing to do with them both, for she hath nothing to do with the temporal sword, but the prince whose subjects equally Christians and Jews are, hath equal power over their persons; for a Christian is no more a subject than a Jew is, the prince hath upon them both the same power of life and death, so that the Jew by being no Christian is not *foris*, or any more an exempt person for his body, or his life, than the Christian is: and yet in all churches where the secular power hath temporal reason to tolerate the

Jews, they are tolerated without any scruple in religion; which thing is of more consideration, because the Jews are direct blasphemers of the Son of God, and blasphemy by their own law, the law of Moses, is made capital; and might with greater reason be inflicted upon them, who acknowledge its obligation than urged upon Christians as an authority, enabling princes to put them to death, who are accused of accidental and consequentive blasphemy and idolatry respectively, which yet they hate and disavow with much zeal and heartiness of persuasion. And I cannot yet learn a reason why we shall not be more complying with them, who are of the household of faith; for at least they are children though they be but rebellious children (and if they were not, what hath the mother to do with them any more then with the Jews?) they are in some relation or habitude of the family, for they are consigned with the same baptism, profess the same faith delivered by the apostles, are erected in the same hope, and look for the same glory to be revealed to them, at the coming of their common Lord and Saviour, to whose service according to their understanding they have vowed themselves: and if the disagreeing persons be to be esteemed as heathens and publicans, yet not worse, *have no company with them*, that is the worst that is to be done to such a man in St. Paul's judgment, *yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*

SECTION XXI.

Of the duty of particular Churches in allowing Communion.

FROM these premises, we are easily instructed concerning the lawfulness or duty respectively of Christian communion, which is differently to be considered in respect of particular churches to each other, and of particular men to particular churches: for as for particular churches, they are bound to allow communion to all those that profess the same faith upon which the apostles did give communion; for whatsoever preserves us as members of the church, gives us title to the communion of saints, and whatsoever faith or belief that is to which God hath promised heaven, that faith makes us members of the Catholic church: since therefore the judicial acts of the church are then most prudent and religious when they nearest imitate the example and piety of God; to make the way to heaven straighter than God made it, or to deny to communicate with those whom God will vouchsafe to be united, and to refuse our charity to those who have the same faith, because they have not all our opinions, and believe not every thing necessary which we over-value; is impious and schismatical, it infers tyranny on one part, and persuades and tempts to uncharitableness and animosities on both; it dissolves societies, and is an enemy to peace, it busies men in impertinent wranglings, and by names of men and titles of factions it consigns the interested parties to act their differences to the

height, and makes them neglect those advantages which piety and a good life bring to the reputation of Christian religion and societies.

And therefore Vincentius Lirinensis, and indeed the whole church accounted the Donatists heretics upon this very ground,* because they did imperiously deny their communion to all that were not of their persuasion; whereas the authors of that opinion for which they first did separate, and make a sect, because they did not break the church's peace nor magisterially prescribed to others, were in that disagreeing and error accounted Catholics. "Division and disunion make you heretics, peace and unity make Catholics,"† said St. Austin; and to this sense is that of St. Paul, *if I had all faith and had not charity, I am nothing*: he who upon confidence of his true belief denies a charitable communion to his brother, loses the reward of both. And if pope Victor had been as charitable to the Asiatics as pope Anicetus, and St. Polycarp were to each other in the same disagreeing concerning Easter, Victor had not been πληκτικῶ τερον καταπθήμενος, so bitterly reprov'd and condemned as he was for the uncharitable managing of his disagreeing by Polycrates and Irenæus; "True faith which leads to charity leads on to that which unites wills and affections, not opinions."‡

Upon these or the like considerations, the emperor Zeno published his *ἐνώτικον*, in which he made the Nicene creed to be the medium of

* Cap. 11. Vid. Pacian. Epist. ad Sempron. 2.

† Divisio enim et disunio facit vos hæreticos, pax et unitas faciunt Catholicos. L. 2. c. 95. contra liter. Petilian.

‡ Concordia enim quæ est charitatis effectus est unio voluntatum non opinionum. Euseb. l. 5. c. 25, 26. Aquin. 22. q. 37. a 1.

Catholic communion, and although he lived after the council of Chalcedon, yet he made not the decrees of that council an instrument of its restraint and limit, as preferring the peace of Christendom, and the union of charity far before a forced or pretended unity of persuasion, which never was, or ever will be real and substantial; and although it were very convenient if it could be had, yet it is therefore not necessary because it is impossible; and if men please, whatever advantages to the public would be consequent to it, may be supplied by a charitable compliance and mutual permission of opinion, and the offices of a brotherly affection prescribed us by the laws of Christianity: and we have seen it, that all sects of Christians, when they have an end to be served upon a third, have permitted that Liberty to a second, which we now contend for, and which they formerly denied but now grant, that by joining hands, they might be the stronger to destroy the third. The Arians and Meletians joined against the Catholics: the Catholics and Novatians joined against the Arians. Now if men would do that for charity which they do for interest, it were handsomer and more ingenuous; for that they do permit each others' disagreements for their interest's sake, convinces them of the lawfulness of the thing, or else the unlawfulness of their own proceedings, and therefore it were better they would serve the ends of charity than of faction, for then that good end would hallow the proceeding and make it both more prudent and more pious, while it serves the design of religious purposes.

SECTION XXII.

That particular men may communicate with churches of different persuasions, and how far they may do it.

AS for the duty of particular men in the question of communicating with churches of different persuasions, it is to be regulated according to the laws of those churches; for if they require no impiety, or any thing unlawful as the condition of their communion, then they communicate with them as they are servants of Christ, as disciples of his doctrine and subjects to his laws, and the particular distinguishing doctrine of their sect hath no influence or communication with him who from another sect is willing to communicate with all the servants of their common lord: for since no church of one name is infallible, a wise man may have either the misfortune or a reason to believe of every one in particular, that she errs in some article or other, either he cannot communicate with any, or else he may communicate with all that do not make a sin or the profession of an error to be the condition of their communion. And therefore, as every particular church is bound to tolerate disagreeing persons in the senses and for the reasons above explicated; so every particular person is bound to tolerate her, that is, not to refuse her communion when he may have it upon innocent conditions: for what is it to me if the Greek church denies procession of the third person from the second, so she will give me the right hand of fellowship, (though I affirm it) therefore because I profess the religion of Jesus Christ, and retain all matters of faith and necessity?

But this thing will scarce be reduced to practice, for few churches that have framed bodies of confession, and articles, will endure any person that is not of the same confession; which is a plain demonstration that such bodies of confession and articles do much hurt, by becoming instruments of separating and dividing communions, and making unnecessary or uncertain propositions a certain means of schism and disunion: but then men would do well to consider whether or no such proceedings do not derive the guilt of schism upon them who least think it, and whether of the two is the schismatic? He that makes unnecessary and (supposing the state of things) inconvenient impositions, or he that disobeys them, because he cannot without doing violence to his conscience believe them? He that parts communion, because without sin he could not entertain it, or they that have made it necessary for him to separate, by requiring such conditions which to man are simply necessary, and to his particular are either sinful or impossible?

The sum of all is this, there is no security in any thing or to any person, but in the pious and hearty endeavours of a good life, and neither sin nor error does impede it from producing its proportionate and intended effect: because it is a direct deletery to sin, and an excuse to errors, by making them innocent, and therefore harmless. And indeed this is the intendment and design of faith: for (that we may join both ends of this discourse together) therefore certain articles are prescribed to us, and propounded to our understanding, that so we might be supplied with instructions, with motives and engagements to incline and determine our wills to the obedience

of Christ. So that obedience is just so consequent to faith, as the acts of will are to the dictates of the understanding: faith therefore being in order to obedience, and so far excellent as itself is a part of obedience or the promoter of it, or an engagement to it; it is evident that if obedience and a good life be secured upon the most reasonable and proper grounds of Christianity, that is, upon the Apostles' creed, then faith also is secured. Since whatsoever is beside the duties, the order of a good life, cannot be a part of faith, because upon faith, a good life is built; all other articles by not being necessary, are no otherwise to be required, but as they are to be obtained and found out, that is, morally, and fallibly, and humanly; it is fit all truths be promoted fairly and properly, and yet but few articles prescribed magisterially, nor framed into symbols and bodies of confession; least of all, after such composures, should men proceed so furiously as to say all disagreeing after such declarations to be damnable for the future, and capital for the present. But this very thing is reason enough to make men more limited in their prescriptions, because it is more charitable in such suppositions so to do.

But in the thing itself, because few kinds of errors are damnable, it is reasonable as few should be capital. And because every thing that is damnable in itself and before God's judgment seat, is not discernable before men (and questions disputable are of this condition) it is also very reasonable that fewer be capital than what are damnable, and that such questions should be permitted to men to believe because they must be left to God to judge. It concerns all persons to see that they do their best to find out truth, and if

they do, it is certain that let the error be never so damnable, they shall escape the error or the misery of being damned for it. And if God will not be angry at men for being invincibly deceived, why should men be angry one at another? For he that is most displeased at another man's error, may also be tempted in his own will, and as much deceived in his understanding: for if he may fail in what he can choose, he may also fail in what he cannot choose: his understanding is no more secured than his will, nor his faith more than his obedience. It is his own fault if he offends God in either, but whatsoever is not to be avoided as errors, which are incident oftentimes even to the best and most inquisitive of men, are not offences against God, and therefore not to be punished or restrained by men; but all such opinions in which the public interests of the commonwealth, and the foundation of faith, and a good life, are not concerned, are to be permitted freely. "Let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind," *Quisque abundet in sensu suo*, was the doctrine of St. Paul, and that is argument and conclusion too; and they were excellent words which St. Ambrose said in attestation of this great truth, "Imperial authority has no right to interdict the Liberty of speaking, nor priestly authority to prevent the speaking what you think."* I end with a story which I find in the Jews' books: when Abraham sat at his tent door, according to his custom, waiting to entertain strangers, he espied an old man, stooping and leaning on his staff, weary with age and travel, coming towards him, who

* Nec imperiale est libertatem dicendi negare, nec sacerdotale quod sentias non dicere.

was an hundred years of age ; he received him kindly, washed his feet, provided supper, caused him to sit down ; but observing that the old man eat and prayed not, nor begged for a blessing on his meat, asked him, why he did not worship the God of heaven ? The old man told him, that he worshipped the fire only, and acknowledged no other god ; at which answer Abraham grew so zealously angry, that he thrust the old man out of his tent, and exposed him to all the evils of the night, and an unguarded condition. When the old man was gone, God called to Abraham, and asked him where the stranger was ? he replied, I thrust him away because he did not worship thee : God answered him, I have suffered him these hundred years, although he dishonoured me, and couldest not thou endure him one night, when he gave thee no trouble ? Upon this saith the story, Abraham fetched him back again, and gave him hospitable entertainment and wise instruction : “ Go thou, and do likewise,” and thy charity will be rewarded by the God of Abraham.

A P P E N D I X,

CONTAINING

“THE ANABAPTIST’S ARGUMENTS ANSWERED.”

IT concerned not the present design of this book to enquire whether these men speak true or no; for if they speak probably, or so as may deceive them that are no fools, it is argument sufficient to persuade us to pity the erring man that is deceived without design; and that is all that I intended. But because all men will not understand my purpose, or think my meaning innocent, unless I answer the arguments which I have made or gathered for mine and their adversaries’, (although I say it be nothing to the purpose of my book, which was only to represent, that even in a wrong cause there may be invincible causes of deception to innocent and unfortunate persons, and of this truth the Anabaptists in their question of Pædo-baptism is a very great instance; yet) I will rather choose to offend the rules of art, than not to fulfil all the requisites of charity: I have chosen

therefore to add some animadversions upon the Anabaptist's plea, upon all that is material, and which can have any considerable effect in the question. For though I have used this art and stratagem of peace justly, by representing the enemy's strength to bring the other party to thoughts of charity and kind comportments; yet I could not intend to discourage the right side, or to make either a mutiny or defection in the armies of Israel. I do not, as the spies from Canaan, say that these men are Anakims, and the city walls reach up to heaven, and there are giants in the land: I know they are not insuperable, but they are like the blind and the lame set before a wall, that a weak man can leap over, and a single troop armed with wisdom and truth can beat all their guards. But yet I think that he said well and wisely to Charles the fighting Duke of Burgundy, that told him that the Switzer's strength was not to be despised, but that an honorable peace and a Christian usage of them were better than a cruel and a bloody war. The event of that battle told all the world, that no enemy is to be despised and rendered desperate at the same time; and that there are but few causes in the world but they do sometimes meet with witty advocates, and in themselves put on such semblances of truth, as will (if not make the victory uncertain, yet) make peace more safe and prudent, and mutual charity to be the best defence.

And first, I do not pretend to say that every argument brought by good men and wise in a right cause must needs be demonstrative. The divinity of the Eternal Son of God is a truth of as great concernment and as great certainty as any thing that ever was disputed in the Christian

church ; and yet he that reads the writings of the fathers, and the acts of councils convened about that great question, will find that all the armour is not proof which is used in a holy war. For that seems to one which does not so to another ; and when a man hath one sufficient reason to secure him and make him confident, every thing seems to him to speak the same sense, though to an adversary it does not : for the one observes the similitude, and pleaseth himself ; the other watches only the dissonancies, and gets advantage ; because one line of likeness will please a believing, willing man, but one will not do the work ; and where many dissimilitudes can be observed, and but one similitude, it were better to let the shadow alone than hazard the substance. And it is to be observed, that heretics and misbelievers do apply themselves rather to disable truth than directly to establish their error ; and every argument they wrest from the hand of their adversaries is to them a double purchase, it takes from the other and makes him less, and makes himself greater : the way to spoil a strong man is to take from him the armour in which he trusted : and when this adversary hath espied a weak part in any discourse, he presently concludes that the cause is no stronger, and reckons his victories by the colours that he takes, though they signified nothing to the strength of the cause. And this is the main way of proceeding in this question : for they rather endeavour to shew that we cannot demonstrate our part of the question, then that they can prove theirs. And as it is indeed easier to destroy than to build, so it is more agreeable to the nature and to the design of heresy : and therefore it were well that in this and in other questions where there are watchful

adversaries, we should fight as Gideon did with 300 hardy brave fellows, that would stand against all violence, rather than to make a noise with rams-horns and broken pitchers, like the men at the siege of Jericho. And though it is not to be expected that all arguments should be demonstrative in a true cause, yet it were well if the generals of the church, which the Scripture affirms is terrible as an army with banners, should not, by sending out weak parties, which are easily beaten, weaken their own army, and give confidence to the enemy.

Secondly, although it is hard to prove a negative, and it is not in many cases to be imposed upon a litigant; yet when the affirmative is received and practised, whoever will disturb the actual persuasion must give his reason, and offer proof for his own doctrine, or let me alone with mine. For the reason why negatives are hard to prove is, because they have no positive cause; but as they have no being, so they have no reason: but then also they are first, and before affirmatives, that is, such which are therefore to prevail because nothing can be said against them. Darkness is before light, and things *are not* before they *are*: and though to prove that things are, something must be said; yet to prove that they are not, nothing is to be alledged but that they are not, and no man can prove they are. But when an affirmative hath entered and prevailed, because no effect can be without some positive cause, therefore this which came in upon some cause or other must not be sent away without cause: and because the negative is in this case later than the affirmative, it must enter as the affirmatives do when they happen to be later than the negative. Add

to this, that for the introduction of a negative against the profession of a prevailing affirmative, it is not enough to invalidate the arguments of the affirmative, by making it appear they are not demonstrative: for although that might have been sufficient to hinder its first entry, yet it is not enough to throw it out, because it hath gotten strength and reasonableness by long custom and dwelling upon the minds of men, and hath some forces beyond what it derives from the first causes of its introduction. And therefore whoever will persuade men to quit their long persuasions and their consonant practices, must not tell them that such persuasions are not certain, and that they cannot prove such practices to be necessary; but that the doctrine is false, against some other revealed truth which they admit, and the practice evil; not only useless, but dangerous or criminal. So that the Anabaptists cannot acquit themselves and promote their cause by going about to invalidate our arguments, unless they do not only weaken our affirmative by taking away not one or two, but all the confidences of its strength, but also make their own negative to include a duty, or its enemy to be guilty of a crime. And therefore, if it were granted that we cannot prove the baptism of infants to be necessary, and that they could speak probably against all the arguments of the right believers; yet it were intolerable that they should be attended to, unless they pretend, and make their pretence good, that they teach piety, and duty, and necessity: for nothing less than these can make recompence for so violent, so great an inroad and rape upon the persuasions of men. Whether the Anabaptists do so or no, will be considered in the sequel.

Thirdly, these arguments which are in the section urged in behalf of the Anabaptists, (their persons) I mean, finally, not their cause at all but in order to their persons, can do the less hurt, because they rely upon our grounds, not upon their's, that is, they are intended to persuade us to a charitable comport towards the men, but not at all to persuade their doctrine. For it is remarkable, that none of them have made use of this way of arguing since the publication of these *adversaria* and of some things they can never make use. As in that exposition of the words of St. Peter, 'Be baptised, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost;' which is expounded to be meant not in baptism, but in confirmation: which is a rite the Anabaptists allow not, and therefore they cannot make use of any such exposition which supposes a divine institution of that which they at no hand admit. And so it is in divers other particulars, as any wary person, that is cautious he be not deluded by any weak and plausible pretence of theirs, may easily observe.

But after all, the arguments for the baptism of children are firm and valid, and though shaken by the adverse plea, yet as trees that stand in the face of storms take the surer root, so will the right reasons of the right believers, if they be represented with their proper advantages.

Ad. 3. & 13. The first argument is the circumcising of children, which we say does rightly infer the baptising them: the Anabaptist says no; because admit that circumcision were the type of baptism, yet it follows not that the circumstances of one must infer the same circumstances in the other; which he proves by many instances; and so far he says true. And therefore if there were

no more in the argument than can be inferred from the type to the the anti-type, both the supposition and the superstructure would be infirm ; because it is uncertain whether circumcision be a type of baptism ; and if it were granted it cannot infer equal circumstances. But then this argument goes further, and to other and more material purposes, even to the overthrow of their chief pretension. For circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of faith : and if infants, who have no faith, yet can by a ceremony be admitted into the covenant of faith, as St. Paul contends that all the circumcised were, and it is certain of infants, that they were reckoned amongst the Lord's people as soon as they were circumcised ; then it follows, that the great pretence of the Anabaptists, that for want of faith infants are incapable of the sacrament, comes to nothing. For if infants were admitted into the covenant of faith by a ceremony before they could enter by choice and reason, by faith and obedience ; then so they may now, their great and only pretence notwithstanding.

Now whereas the Anabaptist says, that in the admission of the Jewish infants to circumcision, and of Christian infants to baptism, there is this difference, that circumcision imprints a character on the flesh, but baptism does not ; circumcision had no word added, but baptism hath ; and therefore infants were capable of the former, but not of the latter ; for they might be cut with the circumcising-stone, but they cannot be instructed with the word of baptism : in that there was a character left by which they might be instructed when they come to age, but in baptism there is no character, and the word they understand not ; therefore that

was to purpose, but this is not. I answer, that this is something to the circumstance of the sacraments, but nothing to the substance of the argument. For if the covenant of faith can belong to infants, then it is certain they can have the benefit of faith before they have the grace ; that is, God will do them benefit before they can do him service : and that is no new thing in religion that God should love us first. But then, that God is not as much before-hand with Christian as with Jewish infants, is a thing which can never be believed by them who understand that in the gospel God opened all his treasures of mercies, and unsealed the fountain itself, whereas before he poured forth only rivulets of mercy and comfort. That circumcision is a seal of the righteousness of faith, St. Paul affirms ; that so also is baptism, (if it be any thing at all) the Anabaptists must needs confess, because they refuse to give baptism to them who have not faith, and make it useless to them, as being a seal without a deed. But then the argument is good upon its first grounds. But then for the title reparties but now mentioned, that circumcision imprints a character, but baptism does not ; that baptism hath a word, but circumcision had none ; they are just nothing to the purpose. For as that character imprinted on the infant's flesh would have been nothing of instruction to them, unless there had been a word added, that is, unless they had been told the meaning of it when they came to be men ; so neither will the word added to baptism be of use either to men or children, unless there be a character upon their spirits imprinted when or before they come to the use of reason by the Holy Spirit of God : but therefore as the Anabaptists would have our infants stay from the

sacrament till they can understand the word ; so also might the imprinting of a character on the flesh of the Jewish infants have been deferred till the word should be added, that is, till they could understand the word, or declaration of the meaning of that character, without which they could not understand its meaning. The case is equal. In the Jewish infants the character was before the word ; in the Christian infants the word is before the character ; but neither that nor this alone could do all the work of the sacrament ; but yet it could do some, and when they could be conjoined, the office was completed. But therefore as the infants under Moses might have that which to them was an insignificant character ; so may the infants under Christ have water, and a word of whose meaning these shall understand as soon as those could understand the meaning of the character. So that these pretended differences signify nothing ; and if they did, yet they are not certainly true, but rather certainly false : for although the scriptures mention not any form of words used in the Mosaic sacraments, yet the Jews' books record them. And then for the other, that there is no character imprinted in baptism ; it is impossible they should reasonably affirm, because it being spiritual is also undiscernable, and cometh not by observation. And although there is no permanent or inherent quality imprinted by the Spirit of baptism that we know of, and therefore will not affirm ; (but neither can they know it not, and therefore they ought not to deny, much less to establish any proposition upon it ;) yet it is certain that, although no quality be imprinted before they come to the use of reason, yet a relation is contracted, and then

the children have title to the promises, and are reckoned in *Christi sensu*, in Christ's account, they are members of his body: and though they can as yet do no duty, yet God can do them a favor; although they cannot yet perform a condition, yet God can make a promise; and although the Anabaptists will be so bold as to restrain infants, yet they cannot restrain God, and therefore the sacrament is not to be denied to them. For although they can do nothing, yet they can receive something; they can by this sacrament as really be admitted into the covenant of faith, even before they have the grace of faith, as the infants of the Jews could: and if they be admitted to this covenant, they are children of faithful Abraham, and heirs of the promise. All the other particulars of their answer to the argument taken from circumcision are wholly impertinent; for they are intended to prove that circumcision being a type of baptism cannot prove that the same circumstances are to be observed: all which I grant. For circumcision was no type of baptism, but was a sacrament of initiation to the Mosaic covenant; and so is baptism of initiation to the evangelical: circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of faith, and so is baptism; but they are both but rites and sacraments, and therefore cannot have the relation of type and antitype; they are both but external ministries fitted to the several periods of the law and the gospel, with this only difference, that circumcision gave place to, was supplied and succeeded to, by baptism; and as those persons who could not be circumcised, I mean the females, yet were baptised, as is notorious in the Jews' books and story, and by that rite were admitted to the same promises and covenant as if they had.

been circumcised : so much more when males and females are only baptised, baptism must be admitted and allowed to consign all that covenant of faith which circumcision did, and therefore to be dispensed to all them who can partake of that covenant, as infants did then, and therefore certainly may now. So that in short, we do not infer that infants are to receive this sacrament because they received that ; that because the benefit and secret purpose of both is the same in some main regards : and if they were capable of the blessing then, so they are now ; and if want of faith hindered not the Jewish babes from entering into the covenant of faith, then neither shall it hinder the Christian babes : and if they can and do receive the benefit for which the ceremony was appointed as a sign and conduit, why they should not be admitted to the ceremony is so very a trifle, that it deserves not to become the entertainment of a fancy in the sober time of the day, but must go into the portion of dreams and illusions of the night.

Ad. 4. And as ill success will they have with the other answers. For although we intend the next argument but as a reasonable inducement of the baptising infants by way of proportion to the other treatments they received from Christ ; yet this probably, notwithstanding all that is said against it, may be a demonstration. For if infants can be brought to Christ by the charitable ministries of others when they cannot come themselves ; if Christ did give them his blessing, and great expressions of his love to them, when they could not by any act of their own dispose themselves to it ; if the disciples, who when they knew nothing of this secret, were reproved for hin-

dering them to be brought, and upon the occasion of this a precept established for ever, that children should be suffered to *come to him*; and though they were brought by others, yet it was all one as if they had come themselves, and was so called, so expounded; and if the reason why they should be suffered to come is such a thing as must at least suppose them capable of the greatest blessing: there is no peradventure, but this will amount to as much as the grace of baptism will come to. For if we regard the outward ministry, that Christ did take them in his arms and lay his hand upon them: it is as much as if the apostles should take them in their arms and lay water upon them: if we regard the effect of it, that Christ blessed them is as much as if his ministers prayed over them: if we regard the capacity of infants, it is such that the kingdom of heaven belongs to them; that is, they also can be admitted to the covenant of the gospel, for that is the least signification of the kingdom of heaven; or they shall be partakers of heaven, which is the greatest signification, and includes all the intermediate ways thither, according to the capacity of the suscipients: if we regard the acceptance of the action and entertainment of the person, it is as great as Christ any where expresses: if we regard the precept, it cannot be supposed to expire in the persons of those little ones which were then brought, for they were come already, and though they were tacitly reprov'd who offer'd to hinder them, yet the children were present; and therefore it must relate to others, to all infants, that they should for ever be brought to Christ. And this is also to be gathered from *τοῖστων*, (of such,) not *τέτων*, (of these;) for these are but a few, but

the kingdom of God is of such as these who are now brought; children make up a great portion of it, and the other portion is made up by such who become like to these. And if the transcript belong to the kingdom, it were strange if the exemplar should not: if none can enter but they who are like children, it must be certain that nothing can hinder the children. And lastly, if we regard the doctrine which Christ established upon this action, it will finish the argument into a certain conclusion; 'Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter therein:' receive it as a little child *receives it*, that is, with innocence and without any let or hindrance. So that they who receive it best receive it but as little children: for they, being the first in the kind, are made the measure of all the rest; and if others shall be excluded for not being like these, it is certain these are not to be excluded for not being like others: others are commanded to be like them in innocence, and that is sufficient to make them recipients of the divine grace; but therefore to make infants to be recipients it is not required that they should have the use of reason. And we do not well consider that it is God who creates all our capacities of grace, and it is he who makes us able to receive what he intends to bestow, and nothing of ours can do it; no good actions can deserve any grace, much less the first grace, the grace of baptism; and all that men can do in the whole use of their reason and order of their life is to return as much as they can to the innocence of their infancy; and prayer is but a seeking after pardon and grace, whereby we may stand as innocents before God, and charity is but growing, and is here principally the extermination of all

malice and envy, and by alms (as Daniel advised to Nebuchadnezzar) we do but break off our sins, and our health is but the expulsion of evil humors, and our pleasure is but the removal of pain, and *optimus est qui minimis urgetur*, and our best holiness is being like to infants: and therefore it is no wonder if God made them the principals in this line, and loves them so well who are innocent of any consent to evil: and although they have done no good, yet they are all that which God loves, they are his image undefiled, unscratched, unbroken by any act or consent of their own: but then it were a very great wonder, if these in whom God sees the work of his own hands, the image of his own essence, the purity of innocence, the capacities of glory, to whom his Holy Son gave such signal testimonies of his love, upon whom he bestowed a blessing, for whose sake he was much displeased when they were hindered to come, whom he declared the exemplar of those who should be saved, and the pattern and precedent of receiving his kingdom, to whom he imparted spiritual favors by a ceremony and solemnity; I say, it were a very great wonder that these should not receive the same favors in the way of ordinary establishment, who have the principle title, and did actually receive them in the extraordinary, before the general appointment of the other. If there be any thing that can hinder them, it must be something without; for nothing within can hinder them to receive that which others cannot receive but by being like them: and if any thing without does hinder them, it cannot expect to fare better than the disciples, with whom Christ was much displeased. But of what can they now be hindered? Not of the grace of the sacrament;

that is their own by way of eminent relation and propriety, the kingdom of heaven is theirs, and of such as they are: not of the sacrament therefore of solemnity, for that is wholly for the other, and is nothing but an instrument, and hath a relative use, and none else; and as it is to no purpose to any man till they receive the grace of it, so it can be for no reason detained from them who shall certainly have the grace though they be forcibly deprived of the instrument. Unless therefore they who could come to Christ, and were commanded to be brought to Christ when he was upon earth, may not, cannot come to him now that he is in heaven, and made our Advocate and our gracious Lord and King; unless they who had the honour of a solemnity from the hands of Christ, may not be admitted to a ceremony from the hands of his servants; unless baptismal water be more than baptismal grace, and to be admitted into the church, be more than to be admitted to heaven; it cannot with any plausible reason be pretended that infants are to be excluded from this sacrament.

Ad. 14. Now as for the little things which the Anabaptists murmur against the first essay of this argument they will quickly disappear. For whereas he says, it were a better argument to say that Christ blessed children and so dismissed them, but baptised them not, therefore infants are not to be baptised; this is perfectly nothing, because Christ baptised none at all, men, women, nor children; and this will conclude against the baptism of men too, as well as infants: and whereas it is hence inferred, that because Christ baptised them not, therefore he hath other ways of bringing them to heaven than by baptism: it is very true, but this

makes very much against them. For if God hath other ways of bringing them to heaven who yet cannot believe, if they can go to heaven without faith, why not to the font? If they can obtain that glorious end in order to which the sacrament is appointed without the act of believing, then so also they may the means. But for what end, to what purpose do they detain the water, when they cannot keep back the Spirit? and why will they keep them from the church, when they cannot keep them from God? And why do men require harder conditions of being baptised, than of being saved? And then, that God will by other means bring them to heaven if they have not baptism, is argument sufficient to prove that God's goodness prevails over the malice and ignorance of men, and that men contend more for shadows than for substances, and are more nice in their own ministrations than God is in the whole effusions of his bounty; and therefore that these disagreeing persons may do themselves injury, but, in the event of things, none to the children. So that this argument though slightly passed over by the Anabaptists, yet is of very great persuasion in this article, and so used and relied upon by the church of England in her office of baptism: and for that reason I have the more insisted upon it.

Ad. 5. The next argument without any alteration or addition stands firm upon its own basis: Adam sinned, and left nakedness to descend upon his posterity, a relative guilt and a remaining misery; he left enough to kill us, but nothing to make us alive: he was the head of mankind in order to temporal felicity; but there was another head intended to be the representative of human nature to bring us to eternal: but the temporal

we lost by Adam ; and the eternal we could never receive from him, but from Christ only : from Adam we receive our nature such as it is ; but grace and truth comes by Jesus Christ : Adam left us an imperfect nature that tends to sin and death, but he left us nothing else, and therefore, to holiness and life we must enter from another principle. So that besides the natural birth of infants there must be something added by which they must be reckoned in a new account : they must be born again, they must be reckoned in Christ, they must be adopted to the inheritance, and admitted to the promise, and entitled to the Spirit. Now that this is done ordinarily in baptism, is not to be denied : for therefore it is called *λειτουργία παλιγγενεσίας*, the font or laver of regeneration ; it is the gate of the church, it is the solemnity of our admission to the covenant evangelical : and if infants cannot go to heaven by the first or natural birth, then they must go by a second and supernatural : and since there is no other solemnity or sacrament, no way of being born again that we know of but by the ways of God's appointing, and he hath appointed baptism, and all that are born again are born this way, even men of reason who have or can receive the spirit being to enter at the door of baptism ; it follows that infants also must enter here, or we cannot say that they are entered at all. And it is highly considerable, that whereas the Anabaptist does clamorously and loudly call for a precept for childrens' baptism ; this consideration does his work for him and us. He that shews the way needs not bid you walk in it : and if there be but one door that stands open, and all must enter some way or other, it were a strange perversion of argument to say that none shall pass in at that door unless they come alone ; and they that are

brought, or they that lean on crutches or the shoulders of others, shall be excluded and undone for their infelicity, and shall not receive help because they have the greatest need of it. But these men use infants worse than the poor paralytick was treated at the pool of Bethesda : he could not be washed because he had none to put him in ; but these men will not suffer any one to put them in, and until they can go in themselves they shall never have the benefit of the Spirit's moving upon the waters.

Ad. 15. But the Anabaptist to this discourse gives only this reply, that the supposition or ground is true, a man by Adam or any way of nature cannot go to heaven : neither men nor infants without the addition of some instrument or means of God's appointing ; but this is to be understood to be true only ordinarily and regularly : but the case of infants is extraordinary, for they are not within the rule and the way of ordinary dispensation ; and therefore there being no command for them to be baptised, there will be some other way to supply it extraordinarily. To this I reply, that this is a plain begging of the question, or a denying the conclusion : for the argument being this, that baptism being the ordinary way or instrument of new birth and admission to the promises evangelical and supernatural happiness, and we knowing of no other and it being as necessary for infants as for men to enter some way or other ; it must needs follow that they must go this way because there is a way for all and we know of no other but this ; therefore the presumption lies on this, that infants must enter this way. They answer, that it is true in all but infants ; the contradictory of which was the conclusion, and intended by the argument. For

whereas they say God hath not appointed a rule and an order in this case of infants, it is the thing in question, and therefore is not by direct negation to be opposed against the contrary argument. For I argue thus, wherever there is no extraordinary way appointed, there we must all go the ordinary; but for infants there is no extraordinary way appointed or declared, therefore they must go the ordinary: and he that hath without difference commanded that all nations should be baptised, hath without difference commanded all sorts of persons: and they may as well say that they are sure God hath not commanded women to be baptised, or hermaphrodites, or eunuchs, or fools, or mutes, because they are not named in the precept; for sometimes in the census of a nation women are no more reckoned than children; and when the children of Israel coming out of Egypt were numbered, there was no reckoning either of women or children, and yet that was the number of the nation which is there described.

But then as to the thing itself, whether God hath commanded infants to be baptised, it is indeed a worthy inquiry, and the sum of all this contestation: but then it is also to be concluded by every argument that proves the thing to be holy, or charitable, or necessary, or the means of salvation, or to be instituted and made in order to an indispensable end. For all commandments are not expressed in imperial forms, as *we will*, or *will not*; *thou shalt*, or *shalt not*: but some are by declaration of necessity, some by a direct institution, some by involution and apparent consequence, some by proportion and analogy, by identities and parities, and Christ never expressly commanded that we should receive the holy communion, but that, when the supper was celebrated,

it should be *in his memorial*. And if we should use the same method of arguing in all other instances as the Anabaptist does in this, and omit every thing for which there is not an express commandment, with an open nomination and describing of the capacities of the persons concerned in the duty, we should have neither sacrament, nor ordinance, fasting, nor vows, communicating of women, nor baptizing of the clergy. And when St. Ambrose was chosen bishop before he was baptized, it could never upon their account have been told that he was obliged to baptism: because though Christ commanded the Apostles to baptize others, yet he no way told them that their successors should be baptized, any more than the Apostles themselves were; of whom we read nothing in Scripture that either they were actually baptized, or had a commandment so to be. To which may be added, that as the taking of priestly orders disoblige the suscipient from receiving chrism or confirmation, in case he had it not before; so, for ought appears in Scripture to the contrary, it may excuse from baptism. But if it does not, then the same way of arguing which obliges women or the clergy to be baptised will be sufficient warrant to us to require in the case of infants no more signal precept than in the other, and to be content with the measures of wise men, who give themselves to understand the meaning of doctrines and laws, and not to exact the titles and unavoidable commands by which fools and unwilling persons are to be governed, lest they die certainly if they be not called upon with univocal, express, open, and direct commandments. But besides all this, and the effects of all the other arguments, there is as much command for infants to be baptized as for men; there being, in the

words of Christ, no nomination or specification of persons, but only in such words as can as well involve children as old men; as, *nisi quis* and *omnes gentes*, and the like.

Ad. 16. But they have a device to save all harmless yet: for though it should be granted that infants are pressed with all the evils of original sin, yet there will be no necessity of baptism to infants, because it may very well be supposed, that as infants contracted the relative guilt of Adam's sin, that is, the evils descending by an evil inheritance from him to us, without any solemnity; so may infants be acquitted by Christ, without solemnity; or the act of any other man. This is the sum of the 16th number. To which the answer is easy. First, that at the most, it is but a dream of proportions, and can infer only that if it were so, there were some correspondency between the effects descending upon us from the two great representatives of the world; but it can never infer that it ought to be so. For these things are not wrought by the ways of nature, in which the proportions are regular and constant; but they are wholly arbitrary and mysterious, depending upon extrinsic causes which are conducted by other measures, which we only know by events, and can never understand the reasons. For because the sin of Adam had effect upon us without a sacrament, must it therefore be wholly unnecessary that the death of Christ be applied to us by sacramental ministrations? If so, the argument will as well conclude against the baptism of men as of infants: for since they die in Adam, and had no solemnity to convey that death, therefore we by Christ, shall all be made alive; and to convey this life there needs no sacrament. This

way of arguing, therefore, is a very trifle, but yet this is not : as infants were not infected with the stain, and injured by the evils of Adam's sin, but by the means of natural generation ; so neither shall they partake of the benefits of Christ's death, but by spiritual regeneration ; that is, by being baptised into his death. For it is easier to destroy than to make alive ; a single crime of one man was enough to ruin him and his posterity : but to restore us, it became necessary that the Son of God should be incarnate, and die, and be buried, and rise again, and intercede for us, and become our Law-giver, and we be his subjects and keep his commandments. There was no such order of things in our condemnation to death ; must it therefore follow that there is no such in the justification of us unto life ? To the first there needs no sacrament, for evil comes fast enough ; but to the latter there must go so much as God please ; and the way which he hath appointed us externally is baptism : to which, if he hath tied us, it is no matter to us whether he hath tied himself to it or no : for although he can go which way he please, yet he himself loves to go in the ways of his ordinary appointing, as it appears in the extreme paucity of miracles which are in the world, and he will not endure that we should leave them. So that although there are many thousand ways by which God can bring any reasonable soul to himself ; yet he will bring no soul to himself by ways extraordinary, when he hath appointed ordinary ; and therefore, although it be unreasonable of our own heads to carry infants to God by baptism, without any direction from him ; yet it is not unreasonable to understand infants to be comprehended in the duty, and to be intended

in the general precept, when the words do not exclude them, nor any thing in the nature of the sacrament ; and when they have a great necessity, for the relief of which this way is commanded, and no other way signified, all the world will say there is reason we should bring them also the same way to Christ. And therefore, though we no ways doubt but if we do not our duty to them, God will yet perform his merciful intention, yet that is nothing to us ; though God can save by miracle, yet we must not neglect our charitable ministries. Let him do what he please to or for infants, we must not neglect them.

Ad. 6. The argument which is here described, is a very reasonable inducement to the belief of the certain effect to be consequent to the baptism of infants: because infants can do nothing towards heaven, and yet they are designed thither, therefore God will supply it. But he supplies it not by any internal assistances, and yet will supply it; therefore by an external. But there is no other external but baptism, which is of his own institution, and designed to effect those blessings which infants need: therefore we have reason to believe that by this way God would have them brought.

Ad. 17. To this it is answered, after the old rate, that God will do it by his own immediate act. Well, I grant it; that is, he will give them salvation of his own goodness, without any condition on the infant's part personally performed ; without faith and obedience, if the infant dies before the use of reason : but then, whereas it is added, that to say God will do it by an external act of ministry, and that by this rite of baptism and no other, is no good argument, unless God could not do it without such means, or said he would not ; the reply is

easy, that we say God will effect this grace upon infants by this external ministry, not because God cannot use another, nor yet, because he hath said he will not, but because he hath given us this and hath given us no other. For he that hath a mind to make an experiment, may upon the same argument proceed thus; God hath given bread to strengthen man's heart, and hath said, that in the sweat of our brows we shall eat bread; and it is commanded that if they do not work, they shall not eat: there being certain laws and conditions of eating, I will give to my laborers and hirelings, but therefore my child shall have none; for be you sure if I give to my child no man's meat, yet God will take as great care of infants as of others, and God will by his own immediate mercy keep them alive as long as he hath intended them to live: but to say that therefore he will do it by external food, is no good argument, unless God could not do it without such means, or that he had said he would not. To this I suppose any reasonable person would say I have given sufficient answer, if I tell him that the argument is good, that the infants must eat man's food, although God can keep them alive without it, and although he hath not said that he will not keep them alive without it; I say, the argument is good, because he hath given them this way: and though he could give them another, and did never say he would not give them another; yet because he never did give them another, it is but reasonable that they should have this. To the last clause of this number, viz. why cannot God as well do his mercies to infants now immediately, as he did before the institution either of circumcision or baptism? I answer, that I know no man that says he cannot: but yet this

was not sufficient to hinder babes from circumcision, and why then shall it hinder them from baptism? For though God could save infants always without circumcision as well as he did sometime, yet he required this of them: and therefore it may be so in baptism, this pretence notwithstanding.

Ad. 7. This number speaks to the main enquiry, and shews the commandment; ‘Unless a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven?’ This precept was in all ages expounded to signify the ordinary necessity of baptism to all persons; and *nisi quis* can mean infants as well as men of age: and because it commands a new birth and a regeneration, and implies that a natural birth cannot entitle us to heaven, but the second birth must; infants, who have as much need and as much right to heaven as men of years, and yet cannot have it by natural or first-birth, must have it by the second and spiritual: and therefore, all are upon the same main account; and when they are accidentally differenced by age, they are also differenced by correspondent, accidental and proportionable duties; but all must be born again. This birth is expressed here by water and the Spirit, that is, by the Spirit in baptismal water; for that is in scripture called the laver of a new birth or regeneration.

Ad. 18. But here the Anabaptist gives us his warrant: though Christ said, none but those who are born again by water and the spirit shall enter heaven; he answers, fear it not, I will warrant you. To this purpose it was once said before, ‘Yea, but hath God said, in the day ye shall eat thereof ye shall die? I say ye shall not die, but

ye shall be like gods.' But let us hear the answer. First, it is said that baptism and the Spirit signify the same thing: for by water, is meant the effect of the Spirit. I reply, that therefore they do not signify the same thing, because, by water is meant the effect of the Spirit; unless the effect and the cause be the same thing: so that there is a contradiction in the parts of the allegation. But if they signify two things, as certainly they do, then they may as well signify the sign and the thing signified, as the cause and the effect; or they may mean the sacrament and the grace of the sacrament, as it is most agreeable to the whole analogy of the gospel. For we are sure that Christ ordained baptism, and it is also certain that in baptism he did give the Spirit; and therefore to confound these two is to no purpose, when severally they have their certain meaning, and the laws of Christ, and the sense of the whole church, the institution and the practice of baptism, make them two terms of a relation, a sign and a thing signified, the sacrament and the grace of the sacrament. For I offer it to the consideration of any man that believes Christ to have ordained the sacrament of baptism, which is most agreeable to the institution of Christ, that by water and the Spirit should be meant the outward element, and inward grace; or that by 'water and Spirit' should be meant only the spirit cleansing us like water? But suppose it did mean so, what would be effected or persuaded by it more than by the other? If it be said that then infants by this place were not obliged to baptism, I reply, that yet they were obliged to new birth nevertheless; they must be born again of the spirit, if not of water and the Spirit; and if they are bound to be

regenerated by the Spirit, why they should not be baptised with water, which is the symbol and sacrament, the *vehiculum*, and channel of its ordinary conveyance, I profess I cannot understand how to make a reasonable conjecture. But it may be they mean, that if by water and the Spirit be only meant *Spiritus purificans*, the cleansing, purifying Spirit, then this place cannot concern infants at all: but this loop-hole I have already obstructed by placing a bar that can never be removed. For it is certain and evident that regeneration or new birth is here enjoined to all as of absolute and indispensable necessity, and if infants be not obliged to it, then by their natural birth they go to heaven, or not at all: but if infants must be born again, then either let these adversaries shew any other way of new birth, but this of water and the Spirit; or let them acknowledge this to belong to infants, and then the former discourse returns upon them in its full strength. So that now I shall not need to consider their parallel instance of ‘being baptised with the Holy Ghost and with fire.’ For although there are differences enough to be observed, the one being only a prophecy, and the other a precept; the one concerning some only, and the other concerning all; the one being verified with degrees and variety, the other equally and to all: yet this place which, in the main expression, I confess to have similitude, was verified in the latter and first signification of it, and so did relate to the miraculous descent of the Holy Ghost in the likeness of tongues of fire; but this concerns not all, for all were not so baptised. And whereas it is said in the objection that the Baptist told not Christ’s disciples, but the Jews; and that therefore

it was intended to relate to all: it was well observed, but to no purpose; for Christ at that time had no disciples. But he told it to the Jews: and yet it does not follow that they should all be baptised with the Holy Ghost and with fire; but it is meant only that that glorious effect should be to them, a sign of Christ's eminency above him, they should see from him a baptism greater than that of John. And that it must be meant of that miraculous descent of the Holy Spirit in Pentecost, and not of any secret gift or private immission, appears, because the Baptist offered it as a sign and testimony of the prelation and greatness of Christ above him; which could not be proved to them by any secret operation which cometh not by observation, but by a great, and miraculous mission, such as was that in Pentecost. So that hence to argue, that we may as well conclude that infants must also pass through the fire, as through the water, is a false conclusion inferred from no premises; because this being only a prophecy, and inferring no duty, could neither concern men or children to any of the purposes of their argument. For Christ never said, 'Unless ye be baptised with fire and the Spirit, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven;' but of *water and the Spirit*, he did say it: therefore though they must pass through the water, yet no smell of fire must pass upon them.

But there are yet two things by which they offer to escape. The one is, that in these words baptism by water is not meant at all, but baptism by the Spirit only; because St. Peter having said that baptism saves us, he adds by way of explication, 'Not the washing of the flesh but the answer of a good conscience towards God, plainly

saying that it is not *water* but the *Spirit*. To this I reply, that when water is taken exclusively to the Spirit, it is very true, that is not water that cleanses the soul, and the cleansing of the body cannot save us; but whosoever urges the necessity of baptism urges it but as a necessary sacrament, or instrument to convey or consign the Spirit: and this they might with a little observation have learned; there being nothing more usual in discourse, than to deny the effect to the instrument, when it is compared with the principle, and yet not intend to deny to it an instrumental efficiency. It is not the pen that writes well but the hand; and St. Paul says, 'It is not I, but the grace of God:' and yet it was *gratia dei mecum*, that is, the principal, and the less principal together. So St. Peter, 'It is not water, but the Spirit,' or which may come to one and the same, 'Not the washing the filth of the flesh, but the purifying the conscience that saves us;' and yet neither one nor the other are absolutely excluded, but the effect which is denied to the instrument is attributed to the principal cause. But however, this does no more concern infants than men of age, for they are not saved by the washing the body, but by the answer of a good conscience, by the Spirit of holiness and sanctification; that is, water alone does not do it, unless the Spirit move upon the water. But that water also is in the ministry, and is not to be excluded from its portion of the work, appears by the words of the Apostle, 'The like figure whereunto, even baptism, saves us,' &c. that is, baptism even as it is a figure saves us, in some sense or other; by way of ministry and instrumental efficiency, by conjunction and consolidation with the other: but the ceremony, the figure, the rite and external ministry must be in, or else his

words will in no sense be true, and could be made true by no interpretation, because the spirit may be the thing figured, but can never be a figure. The other little *κρησφύγητον* is, that these words were spoken before baptism was ordained, and therefore could not concern baptism, much less prove the necessity of baptising infants. I answer, that so are the sayings of the prophets long before the coming of Christ, and yet concerned his coming most certainly. Secondly, they are not spoken before the institution of baptism, for the disciples of Christ did baptize more than the Baptist ever in his life-time: they were indeed spoken before the commission was of baptising all nations, or taking the Gentiles into the church; but not before Christ made disciples, and his Apostles baptised them among the Jews. And it was so known a thing that great prophets and the fathers of an institution did baptize disciples, that our blessed Saviour upbraided Nicodemus for his ignorance of that particular, and his not understanding words spoken in the proportion and imitation of custom so known amongst them.

But then that this argument which presses so much may be attempted in all the parts of it, like soldiers fighting against curiassiers, that try all the joints of their armour, so do these to this.—For they object in the same number that the exclusive negative of *nisi quis* does not include infants, but only persons capable; for, say they, this no more infers a necessity of infants' baptism than the parallel words of Christ. *Nisi comederitis* (unless ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you) infer a necessity to give them the holy communion, &c. With this argument men use to make a great noise in many questions; but in this it will signify but little.

First, indeed to one of the Roman communion it will cause some disorder in this question, both because they think it unlawful to give the holy communion to infants, and yet that these words are meant of the holy communion; and if we thought so too, I do not doubt but we should communicate them with the same opinion of necessity as did the primitive church. But to the thing itself: I grant that the expression is equal, and infers an equal necessity in their respective cases; and therefore it is as necessary to eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and to drink his blood, as to be baptised; but then it is to be added, that eating and drinking are metaphors and allusions, used only upon occasion of manner which was then spoken of, and which occasioned the whole discourse; but the thing itself is nothing but that Christ should be received for the life of our souls, as bread and drink is for the life of our bodies. Now, because there are many ways of receiving Christ, there are so many ways of obeying this precept; but that some way or other it be obeyed, is as necessary as that we be baptised. Here only it is declared to be necessary that Christ be received, that we derive our life and our spiritual and eternal being from him; now this can concern infants, and does infer an ordinary necessity of their baptism: for in baptism they are united to Christ and Christ to them; in baptism they receive the beginning of a new life from Christ; it is a receiving Christ which is the duty here enjoined; this is one way of doing it, and all the ways that they are capable of. And that this precept can be performed this way St. Augustine affirms expressly in his third book *De peccatorum meritis et remissione*.*

* Et in Serm. ad Infantes apud V. Bedam in 1 Cor. 10. John 6. 63..

In this thing there is nothing hard but the metaphors of eating and drinking. Now that this is to be spiritually understood our blessed Lord himself affirms in answer to the prejudice of the offended Capernaïtes; that it is to be understood of faith, and that faith is the spiritual manducation, is the sense of the ancient church: and therefore in what sense soever any one is obliged to believe, in the same sense he is obliged to the duty of spiritual manducation, and no otherwise. But because infants cannot be obliged to the act or habit of faith, and yet can receive the sacrament of faith, they receive Christ as they can, and as they can are entitled to life. But however, by this means the difficulty of the expression is taken off: for if by eating and drinking Christ, is meant receiving Christ by faith, then this phrase can be no objection but that St. Austin's affirmative may be true, and that this commandment is performed by infants in baptism, which is the sacrament of faith. To eat and drink, does with as great impropriety signify faith as baptism; but this is it which I said at first, that the metaphorical expression was no part of the precept, but the *vehiculum* of the commandment occasioned by the preceding discourse of our blessed Saviour; and nothing is necessary but that Christ should be received by all that would have life eternal: of which, because infants are capable, and without receiving Christ, they, (by virtue of these words) are not capable, and but in baptism they cannot receive Christ; it follows that these words are no argument to infer an equal necessity of communicating infants, but they are a good argument to prove a necessity of baptising them. Secondly, but farther yet; I demand can infants receive Christ in the Eucharist? Can they in that sacrament, eat

the flesh of Christ, and drink his blood? If they cannot, then neither these words nor any other can infer an equal necessity of being communicated; for they can infer none at all: and whether those other words of *nisi quis renatus fuerit, &c.* do infer a necessity of baptism, will be sufficiently cleared upon their own account. But if infants can receive Christ in the eucharist, to which they can no more dispose themselves by repentance than they can to baptism by faith, then it were indeed very well if they were communicated, but yet not necessary; because if they can receive Christ in the Eucharist, they can receive Christ in baptism; and if they can receive him any way, this precept is performed by that way; and then whether they must also be communicated must be enquired by other arguments; for whatsoever is in these words intended is performed by any way of receiving Christ, and therefore cannot infer more in all circumstances and to all persons. Thirdly, suppose these words were to be expounded of sacramental manducation of the flesh of Christ in the Lord's supper, yet it does not follow that infants are as much bound to receive the communion as to receive the baptism. It is too crude a fancy to think that all universal propositions, whether affirmative or negative, equally expressed, do signify an equal universality. It is said in the law of Moses, *Whosoever is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people*: this indeed signifies universally, and included infants, binding them to that sacrament. But when it was said, *Whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great*; although these words be expressed with as great a latitude as the other, yet it is certain it did not include infants,

who could not seek the Lord. The same is the case of the two sacraments: the obligation to which we do not understand only by the preceptive words or form of the commandments, but by other appendages and the words of duty that are relative to the suscipients of the several sacraments, and the analogy of the whole institution. Baptism is the sacrament of beginners, the eucharist of proficients; that is the birth, this is the nourishment of a Christian. There are many more things of difference to be observed. But as the church in several ages hath practised severally in this article, so in the particular there is no such certainty but that the church may without sin do it or not do it as she sees cause. But that there is not the same necessity in both to all persons, and that no necessity of communicating infants can be inferred from the parallel words, appears in the former answers, and therefore I stand to them.

Ad. 9. The sum of the sixth argument is this. The promise of the Holy Ghost is made to all, to us and to our children: and if the Holy Ghost belong to them, then baptism belongs to them also; because baptism is the means of conveying the Holy Ghost, as appears in the words of St. Peter, *Be baptised, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost*; as also, because from this very argument, St. Peter resolved to baptise Cornelius and his family, because they had received the gift of the Holy Ghost: for they that are capable of the same grace are receptive of the same sign. Now that infants also can receive the effects of the Holy Spirit is evident, because besides that the promise of the Holy Ghost is made to all, to us and our posterity, St. Paul affirms that the children of believing parents are holy: but all

holiness is an emanation from the Holy Spirit of God.

Ad. 19. To the words of St. Peter they answer, that the promise does appertain to our children, that is, to our posterity ; but not till they are capable: they have the same right which we have, but enter not into possession of their right till they have the same capacity: for by *children* are not meant infants, but as the children of Israel signifies the descendants only, so it is here. And indeed this is true enough, but not pertinent enough to answer the intention and efficiency of these words. For I do not suppose that the word *children* means infants, but *you and your children* must mean all generations of Christendom, all the descendants of Christian parents: and if they belong to their posterity because they are theirs, then the promises belong to all that are so; and then children cannot be excluded. But I demand, have not the children of believing parents a title to the promises of the gospel? If they have none, then the kingdom of heaven belongs not to such; and if they die, we can do nothing but despair of their salvation: which is a proposition whose barbarity and unreasonable cruelty confutes itself. But if they have a title to the promises, then the thing is done, and this title of theirs can be signified by these words; and then either this is a good argument, or the thing is confessed without it. For he that hath a title to the promises of the gospel, hath a title to this promise here mentioned, the promise of the Holy Spirit; for *by him we are sealed to the day of redemption*.

And indeed that this mystery may be rightly understood, we are to observe that the Spirit of God is the great ministry of the gospel, and

whatsoever blessing evangelical we can receive, it is the emanation of the Spirit of God. Grace and pardon, wisdom and hope, offices and titles, and relations ; powers, privileges and dignities, all are the good things of the Spirit ; whatsoever we can profit withal, or whatsoever we can be profited by, is a gift of God the Father of Spirits, and is transmitted to us by the Holy Spirit of God. For it is but a trifle and a dream to think that no person receives the Spirit of God, but he that can do actions and operations spiritual. St. Paul distinguishes the effects of the Spirit into three classes : there are ‘ *gifts*,’ χαρίσματα and ‘ *ministries*,’ διακονίαι and ‘ *operations*,’ ἐνεργήματα. besides these *operations*, there are *gifts* and *ministries*, and they that receive not the ἐνεργήματα, the operations or power to do actions spiritual, may yet receive *gifts*, or at least the blessings of *ministry* ; they can be ministred to by others who from the Spirit have received the power of ministration. And I instance in these things, in which it is certain we can receive the Holy Spirit without any predisposition of our own. First, we can receive *gifts* ; even the wicked have them, and they who shall be rejected at the day of judgment, shall yet argue for themselves, that they have wrought miracles in the name of the Lord Jesus ; and yet the gift of miracles is a gift of the Holy Spirit ; and if the wicked can receive them, who are of dispositions contrary to all the emanations of the Holy Spirit, then much more may children, who, although they cannot prepare themselves any more than the wicked do, yet neither can they do against them, to hinder or obstruct them. But of this we have an instance in a young child, Daniel, whose spirit God raised up to acquit the innocent,

and to save her soul from unrighteous judges : and when the boys in the street sang Hosanna to the son of David, our blessed Lord said, that if they had held their peace, the stones of the street would have cried out Hosanna. And, therefore, that God should from the *mouths of babes and sucklings ordain his own praise*, is one of the *magnalia Dei* ; but no strange thing to be believed by us who are so apparently taught it in Holy Scripture. Secondly, benediction or blessing is an emanation of God's Holy Spirit, and in the form of blessing which is recorded in the epistles of St. Paul, one great part of it is the communication of the Holy Spirit : and it is very probable that those three are but *synonyma*. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*, is to give us his Holy Spirit ; and *the love of God* is to give us his Holy Spirit ; for the Spirit is the love of the Father, and our blessed Saviour argues it as the testimony of God's love to us ; ' if ye, who are evil, know how to give good things to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Spirit to them that ask him ? ' Now since the great sum and compendium of evangelical blessings is the Holy Spirit, and this which is expressed by three synonymas in the 2d Epistle to the Corinthians, is in the first reduced to one, it is all but ' the grace of the Lord Jesus ; ' it will follow that, since our blessed Saviour gave his solemn blessing to children, his blessing relating to the kingdom of heaven, (for of such is the kingdom) he will not deny his Spirit to them : when he blessed them, he gave them something of his Spirit, some emanation of that which blesses us all, and without which no man can be truly blessed. Thirdly, titles to inheritance can be given to infants without

any predisposing act of their own. Since therefore infants dying so can, as we all hope, receive the inheritance of saints, some mansion in heaven, in that kingdom which belongs to them, and such as they are, and that the gift of the Holy Spirit is the consignation to that inheritance; nothing can hinder them from receiving the Spirit, that is, nothing can hinder them to receive a title to the inheritance of the saints, which is the free gift of God, and the effect and blessing from the Spirit of God.

Now how this should prove to infants to be a title to baptism, is easy enough to be understood: 'For by one Spirit we are all baptised into one body;' that is, the Spirit of God moves upon the waters of baptism, and in that sacrament adopts us into the mystical body of Christ, and gives us title to a coinheritance with him.

Ad. 21. So that this perfectly confutes what is said in the beginning of Number 21, that baptism is not the means of conveying the Holy Ghost. For it is the Spirit that baptises, it is the Spirit that adopts us to an inheritance of the promises, it is the Spirit that incorporates us into the mystical body of Christ; and upon their own grounds it ought to be confessed: for since they affirm the water to be nothing without the Spirit, it is certain that the water ought not to be without the Spirit; and therefore that this is the soul and life of the sacrament, and therefore usually in conjunction with that ministry, unless we hinder it: and it cannot be denied but that the Holy Ghost was given ordinarily to new converts at their baptism. And whereas it is said in a parenthesis, that this was (not as the effect is to the cause or to the proper instrument, but as a consequent is to an

antecedent in a chain of causes accidentally and by positive institution depending upon each other;) it is a groundless assertion: for when the men were called upon to be baptised, and were told that they should receive the Holy Ghost; and we find that when they were baptised, they did receive the Holy Ghost; what can be more reasonable than to conclude baptism to be the ministry of the Spirit? And to say that this was not consequent, properly, and usually, but accidentally only, it followed sometimes, but was not so much as instrumentally effected by it, is as if one should boldly deny all effect to physic: for though men are called upon to take physic, and told they should recover, and when they do take physic they do recover; yet men may unreasonably say, this recovery does follow the taking of physic, not as an effect to the cause or to the proper instrument, but as a consequent is to an antecedent in a chain of causes accidentally and by positive institution depending upon each other. Who can help it if men will say that it happened that they recovered after the taking of physic, but then was the time in which they should have been well however? The best confutation of them is to deny physic to them when they need, and try what nature will do for them without the help of art. The case is all one in this question, this only excepted, that in this case it is more unreasonable than in the matter of physic, because the Spirit is expressly signified to be the baptiser in the fore-cited place of St. Paul.

From hence we argue, that since the Spirit is ministered in baptism, and that infants are capable of the Spirit, the Spirit of adoption, the Spirit of incorporation into the body of Christ, the Spirit

of sealing them to the day of redemption, the Spirit entitling them to the promises of the gospel, the Spirit consigning to them God's part of the covenant of grace; they are also capable of baptism: for whoever is capable of the grace of the sacrament, is capable of the sign or sacrament itself.

To this last clause the Anabaptist answers two things. First, that the Spirit of God was conveyed sometimes without baptism. I grant it, but what then? Therefore baptism is not the sign or ministry of the Holy Ghost? it follows not. For the Spirit is the great wealth and treasure of Christians, and is conveyed in every ministry of divine appointment; in baptism, in confirmation, in absolution, in orders, in prayer, in benediction, in assembling together. Secondly, the other thing they answer is this, that it is not true that they who are capable of the same grace are capable of the same sign; for females were capable of the righteousness of faith, but not of the seal of circumcision. I reply, that the proposition is true, not in natural capacities; but in spiritual and religious regards; that is, they who in religion are declared capable of the grace, are by the same religion capable of the sacrament or sign of that grace. But naturally they may be incapable by accident, as in the objection is mentioned. But then this is so far from invalidating the argument, that it confirms it in the present instance. *Exceptio firmat regulam in non exceptis*. For even the Jewish females, although they could not be circumcised, yet they were baptised even in those days, as I have proved already;* and although

* See the Great Exemplar, part 1, Disc. of Baptism, numb. 8, 9, 10.

their natural indisposition denied them to be circumcised, yet neither nature nor religion forbade them to be baptised: and therefore since the sacrament is such a ministry of which all are naturally capable, and none are forbidden by the religion, the argument is firm and unshaken, and concludes with as much evidence and certainty as the thing requires.

Ad. 10. The last argument from reason is, that it is reasonable to suppose that God in the period of grace, in the days of the gospel, would not give us a more contracted comfort, and deal with us by a narrower hand than with the Jewish babes, whom he sealed with a sacrament as well as enriched with a grace, and therefore openly consigned them to comfort and favour.

Ad. 22. To this they answer, that we are to trust the word without a sign; and since we contend that the promise belongs to us and to our children, why do we not believe this, but require a sign? I reply, that if this concludes any thing, it concludes against the baptism of men and women; for they hear and read, and can believe the promise, and it can have all its effects, and produce all its intentions upon men; but yet they also require the sign, they must be baptised. And the reason why they require it is, because Christ hath ordained it. And therefore, although we can trust the promise without a sign, and that if we did not, this manner of sign would not make us believe it, for it is not a miracle, that is, a sign proving, but it is a sacrament, that is, a sign signifying; and although we do trust the promise even in the behalf of infants when they cannot be baptised: yet by the same reason as we trust the promise, so we also use the rite, both in obedience

to Christ; and we use the rite or the sacrament, because we believe the promise; and if we did not believe that the promise did belong to our children, we would not baptise them. Therefore this is such an impertinent quarrel of the Anabaptists, that it hath no strength at all but what it borrows from a cloud of words, and the advantages of its representment. As God did openly consign his grace to the Jewish babes by a sacrament, so he does to ours: and we have reason to give God thanks, not only for the comfort of it, (for that is the least part of it) but for the ministry and conveyance of the real blessing in this holy mystery.

Ad. 23, 24, 25. That which remains of objections and answers is wholly upon the matter of examples and precedents from the Apostles, and first descending ages of the church; but to this I have already largely spoken in a discourse upon this question;* and if the Anabaptists would be concluded by the practice of the universal church in this question, it would quickly be at an end. For although sometimes the baptism of children was deferred till the age of reason and choice; yet it was only when there was no danger of the death of the children: and although there might be some advantages gotten by such delation, yet it could not be endured that they should be sent out of the world without it. “It is better they should be sanctified even when they understand it not, than that they should go away from hence without the seal of perfection and sanctification.”†

* Disc. of baptism of infants, versùs finem, in the Great Exemplar, part I, p. 202, &c.

† Κρείσσον γὰρ ἀναισθήτω ἁγιασθῆναι, ἢ ἀπελθεῖν ἀσφράγισα καὶ ἀτέλεσα. St. Gregory Nazianzen,

Secondly, but that baptism was amongst the ancients sometimes deferred, was not always upon a good reason, but sometimes upon the same account as men now-a-days defer repentance, or put off confession, and absolution, and the communion till the last day of their life: that their baptism might take away all the sins of their life. Thirdly, it is no strange thing that there are examples of late baptism, because heathenism and christianity were so mingled in towns, and cities, and private houses, that it was but reasonable sometimes to stay till men did choose their religion, from which it was so likely they might afterwards be tempted. Fourthly, the baptism of infants was always most notorious, and used in the churches of Africa, as is confessed by all that know the ecclesiastical story. Fifthly, among the Jews it was one and all: if the *major domo* or master of the family believed, he believed for himself and all his family, and they all followed him to baptism, even before they were instructed; and therefore it is, that we find mention of the baptism of whole families, in which, children are as well to be reckoned as the uninstructed servants: and if actual faith be not required before baptism, even of those who are naturally capable of it, as it is notorious in the case of the gaolor, who believed, and at that very hour, he and all his family were baptised, then want of faith cannot prejudice infants, and then nothing can. Sixthly, there was never in the church a command against the baptising infants: and whereas, it is urged that in the council of Neocæsarea, the baptism of a pregnant woman did no way relate to the child, and that the reason there given, excludes all infants upon the same account, because every one is to shew his faith by his own choice and election;

I answer, that this might very well be in those times where christianity had not prevailed, but was forced to dispute for every single proselyte, and the mother was a christian, and the father a heathen; there was reason that the child should be let alone till he could choose for himself, when peradventure it was not fit his father should choose for him: and that is the meaning of the words of Balsamo and Zonaras upon that canon. But secondly, the words of the Neocæsarean canon are not rightly considered. For the reason is not relative to the child, but only to the woman, concerning whom the council thus decreed. ‘The woman with child may be baptized when she will:’* for her baptism reaches not to the child; because every one confesses his faith by his own act and choice: that is, the woman confesses only for herself, she intends it only for herself, she chooses only for herself; and therefore is only baptised for herself. But this intimates, that if she could confess for her child, the baptism would relate to her child; but therefore when the parents do confess for the child, or the god-fathers, and that the child is baptised into that confession, it is valid. However nothing in this canon is against it.

I have now considered all that the Anabaptists can with probability object against our arguments, and have discovered the weakness of their exceptions, by which although they are, and others may be abused, yet it is their weakness that is the cause of it: for which although the men are to be pitied, yet it may appear now that their cause is not at all the better.

* ἔδεν γὰρ κοινωνεῖ ἡ τῆκεσα τῷ τικτομένῳ διὰ τὸ ἑκάτε ἰδίαν τὴν προαίρεσιν τὴν ἐν τῇ ὁμολογίᾳ δείκνυσθαι.

Ad. 28. It remains that I consider their own arguments by which they support themselves in their mispersuasion. First, it is against the analogy of the gospel : for besides that Christ never baptised any infants, nor his Apostles, there is required to baptism faith and repentance ; of which because infants are not capable, neither are they capable of the sacrament. To these things I answer, that it is true Christ never baptised infants, for he baptised no person at all : but he blessed infants, and what that amounts to I have already discoursed ; and he gave a commandment of baptism which did include them also, as I have proved in the foregoing periods, and in other places. That the Apostles never baptised infants, is boldly said, but can never be proved. But then as to the main of the argument, that faith and repentance are pre-required ; I answer, it is in this as it was in circumcision, to which a proselyte could not be admitted from gentilism or idolatry, unless he gave up his name to the religion, and believed in God and his servant Moses ; but yet their children might : and it might have been as well argued against their children as our's, since in their proselytes and our's there were required predispositions of faith and repentance. 2. But it is no wonder that these are called for by the Apostles of those whom they invited to the religion : they dealt with men of reason, but such who had superinduced foul sins to their infidelity ; which were to be removed before they could be illuminated and baptised ; but infants are in their pure naturals, and therefore nothing hinders them from receiving the gifts and mere graces of God's Holy Spirit before-mentioned. 3. But we see also that, although Christ required faith of them who came to

be healed, yet when any were brought, or came in behalf of others, he only required faith of them who came, and their faith did benefit to others. For no man can call on him on whom they have not believed, but therefore they who call must believe; and if they call for others, they must believe that Christ can do it for others. But this instance is so certain a reproof of this objection of their's, which is their principal, which is their all, that it is a wonder to me they should not all be convinced at the reading and observing of it. I knew an eminent person amongst them, who having been abused by their fallacies, upon the discovery of the falsehood of this their main allegation was converted: and I know also some others who could not at all object against it; but if they had been as humble as they were apprehensive, would certainly have confessed their error. But to this, I can add nothing new beyond what I have largely discoursed of in the treatise of baptism before-mentioned.

Ad. 30. The next argument is, If baptism be necessary to infants, upon whom is the imposition laid? To whom is the command given? The children are not capable of a law, therefore it is not given to them: nor yet to the parents, because if so, then the salvation of infants should be put into the power of others who may be careless or malicious. I answer, that there is no precept of baptising infants just in that circumstance of age; for then they had sinned who had deferred it upon just grounds to their manhood. But it is a precept given to all, and it is made necessary by that order of things which Christ hath constituted in the New Testament; so that if they be baptised at all in their just period, there is no command-

ment broken: but if infants come not to be men, then it was accidentally necessary they should have been baptised before they were men. And now to the inquiry, upon whom the imposition lies, it is easy to give an answer; it lies upon them who can receive it, and therefore upon the parents; not so that the salvation of infants depends upon others, God forbid; but so, that if they neglect the charitable ministry, they shall dearly account for it. It is easy to be understood by two instances. God commanded that children should be circumcised, Moses by his wife's peevishness neglected it, and therefore the Lord sought to kill him for it, not Gershom the child. It is necessary for the preservation of children's lives that they eat, but the provisions of meat for them, is a duty incumbent on the parents; and yet if parents expose their children, it may be, the lives of the children shall not depend on others; but when *their father and mother forsaketh them, the Lord taketh them up*; and so it is in this particular; what is wanting to them by the neglect of others, God will supply by his own graces and immediate dispensation. But if baptism be made necessary to all, then it ought to be procured for those who cannot procure it for themselves; just as meat and drink, and physic, and education. And it is in this as it is in blessing: little babes cannot ask it, but their needs require it; and therefore, as by their friends they were brought to Christ to have it, so they must without their asking, minister it to them, who yet are bound to seek it as soon as they can. The precept binds them both in their several periods.

Ad. 31. But their next great strength consists in this dilemma. If baptism does no good, there needs no contention about it: if it does, then either

by the *opus operatum* of the sacrament, or by the dispositions of the suscipient. If the former, that is worse than popery: if the latter, then infants cannot receive it, because they cannot dispose themselves to its reception. I answer, that it works its effect neither by the ceremony alone, nor yet by that and the dispositions together, but by the grace of God working as he please, seconding his own ordinance; and yet infants are rightly disposed for the receiving the blessings and effects of baptism. For the understanding of which, we are to observe that God's graces are so free, that they are given to us upon the accounts of his own goodness only, and for the reception of them we are tied to no other predispositions but that we do not hinder them. For what worthiness can there be in any man to receive the first grace? Before grace there can be nothing good in us, and therefore before the first grace there is nothing that can deserve it; because before the first grace there is no grace, and consequently no worthiness. But the dispositions which are required in men of reason, is nothing but to remove the hinderances of God's grace, to take off the contrarieties to the good Spirit of God. Now because in infants there is nothing that can resist God's Spirit, nothing that can hinder him, nothing that can grieve him, they have that simplicity and nakedness, that passivity and negative disposition or non-hinderances, to which all that men can do in disposing themselves are but approaches and similitudes; and therefore infants can receive all that they need, all that can do them benefit. And although there are some effects of the Holy Spirit which require natural capacities to be their foundation; yet those are the *ἐνεργήματα* or powers of working:

but the *χρησματα*, and the inheritance and the title to the promises require nothing on our part, but that we can receive them, that we put no hindrance to them : for that is the direct meaning of our blessed Saviour, *He that doth not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein* ; that is, without that nakedness and freedom from obstruction and impediment none shall enter.

Upon the account of this truth, all that long harangue that pursues this dilemma in other words to the same purposes, will quickly come to nothing. For baptism is not a mere ceremony, but assisted by the grace of the Lord Jesus, the communication of the Holy Spirit; and yet it requires a duty on our part when we are capable of duty, and need it ; but is enabled to produce its effect without any positive disposition, even by the negative of children, by their not putting a bar to the Holy Spirit of God, that God may be glorified, and may be all in all.

Two particulars more are considerable in their argument.

The first is a syllogism made up out of the words of St. Paul, *All that are baptised into Christ have put on Christ*. The minor proposition is, with a little straining some other words of St. Paul, thus, *But they that put on Christ, or the new man, must be formed in righteousness and holiness of truth* ; for so the Apostle, *Put ye on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*. But infants cannot put on Christ to any such purposes, and therefore cannot be baptised into Christ. I answer, that to put on Christ is to become like unto him, and we put him on in all ways by which we resemble him.

The little babes of Bethlehem were like unto Christ, when it was given to them to die for him who died for them and us : we are like unto him when we have put on his robe of righteousness, when we are invested with the wedding garment, when we submit to his will and to his doctrine, when we are adopted to his inheritance, when we are innocent, and when we are washed, and when we are buried with him in baptism. The expression is a metaphor, and cannot be confined to one particular signification : but if it could, yet the Apostle does not say, that all, who in any sense put on the new man, are actually holy and righteous ; neither does he say that by the *new man* is meant Christ, for that also is another metaphor, and it means a new manner of living. When Christ is opposed to Adam, Christ is called the *new man* ; but when the new man is opposed to the old conversation, then by the *new man* Christ is not meant : and so it is in this place, it signifies to become a new man, and it is an exhortation to those who had lived wickedly, now to live holily and according to the intentions of Christianity. But to take two metaphors from two several books, and to centre them into one signification, and to make them up into one syllogism, is “a fourfold error,” *fallacia quatuor terminorum* ; they prove nothing but the craft of the men, or the weakness of the cause. For the words to the Ephesians, were spoken to them who already had been baptised, who had before that, in some sense, put on Christ, but yet he calls upon them to put on the new man ; therefore this is something else ; and it means that they should verify what they had undertaken in baptism : which also can concern children, but is seasonable to urge it to them, as St. Paul does to the Ephe-

sians, after their baptism. But yet after all, let the argument press as far as it is intended, yet infants even in the sense of the Apostle *Do put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness*: for so are they; they are a *new creation*, they are *born again*, they are formed after the image of Christ by the designation and adoption of the Holy Spirit: but as they cannot do acts of reason, and yet are created in a reasonable nature; so they are anew created in righteousness even before they can do acts spiritual; that is, they are *designati sanctitatis*, (as Tertullian's expression is) they are in the second birth as in the first, instructed with the beginnings and principles of life, not with inherent qualities, but with titles and relations to promises and estates of blessing and assistances of holiness, which principles of life if they be nourished will express themselves in perfect and symbolical actions. The thing is easy to be understood by them who observe the manner of speaking usual in scripture. *We are begotten to a lively hope*, so St. Paul: the very consignation and designing us to that hope which is laid up for the saints is a new birth, a regeneration, the beginnings of a new life: and of this, infants are as capable as any.

The other thing is this, that the infant's vow is invalid till it be after confirmed in the days of reason; and therefore it were as good to be let alone till it can be made with effect. I answer, that if there were nothing in the sacrament but the making of a vow, I confess I could see no necessity in it, nor any convenience, but that it engages children to an early piety, and their parents and guardians by their care to prevent the follies of their youth: but then when we consider

that infants receive great blessings from God in this holy ministry, that what is done to them on God's part is of great effect before the ratification of their vow, this prudential consideration of theirs is light and airy.

And after all this it will be easy to determine which is the surer way. For certainly to baptise infants is hugely agreeable to that charity which Christ loved in those who brought them to him; and if infants die before the use of reason, it can do them no hurt that they were given to God in a holy designation; it cannot any way be supposed, and is not pretended by any one, to prejudice their eternity: but if they die without baptism, it is then highly questioned whether they have not an intolerable loss. And if it be questioned by wise men, whether the want of it do not occasion their eternal loss, and it is not questioned whether baptism does them any hurt or no, then certainly to baptise them is the surer way, without all peradventure.

Ad. 33. The last number sums up many words of affrightment together, but no argument, nothing but bold and unjustifiable assertions; against which I only oppose their direct contradictories. But instead of them, the effect of the former discourse is this, that whoever shall pertinaciously deny or carelessly neglect the baptism of infants, does uncharitably expose his babes to the danger of an eternal loss, from which there is no way to recover but an extraordinary way which God hath not revealed to us; he shuts them out of the church, and keeps them out who are more fit to enter than himself; he as much as lies in him, robs the children of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and a title to the promises evangelical; he supposes that they

cannot receive God's gifts, unless they do in some sense or other deserve them, and that a negative disposition is not sufficient preparation to a new creation, and an obediencial capacity is nothing, and yet it was all that we could have in our first creation; he supposes that we must do something before the first grace, that is, that God does not love us first, but we first love him, that we seek him, and he does not seek us, that we are beforehand with, and therefore can do something without him, that nature can alone bring us to God. For if he did not suppose all this, his great pretence of the necessity of faith and repentance would come to nothing: for infants might without such dispositions receive the grace of baptism, which is always the first; unless by the superinducing of actual sins upon our nature we make it necessary to do something to remove the hinderances of God's Spirit, and that some grace be accidentally necessary before that which ordinarily and regularly is the first grace. He, I say, that denies baptism to infants does disobey Christ's commandment, which being in general and indefinite terms, must include all that can be saved, or can come to Christ; and he excepts from Christ's commandment whom he pleases, without any exception made by Christ; he makes himself Lord of the sacrament, and takes what portions he pleases from his fellow-servants, like an evil and an unjust steward; he denies to bring little children to Christ, although our dearest Lord commanded them to be brought; he upbraids the practice and charity of the holy Catholic church, and keeps infants from the communion of saints, from a participation of the promises, from their part of the covenant, from the laver of regeneration,

from being rescued from the portion of Adam's inheritance, from a new creation, from the kingdom of God, which belongs to them and such as are like them. And he that is guilty of so many evils, and sees such horrid effects springing from his doctrine, must quit his error, or else openly profess love to a serpent, and direct enmity to the most innocent part of mankind.

I do not think the Anabaptists perceive or think these things to follow from their doctrine: but yet they do so really. And therefore the effect of this is, that their doctrine is wholly to be reproved and disavowed, but the men are to be treated with the usages of a christian: strike them not as an enemy, but exhort them as brethren. They are with all means christian and human to be redargued or instructed: but if they cannot be persuaded, they must be left to God, who knows every degree of every man's understanding, all his weaknesses and strengths, what impress every argument makes upon his spirit, and how uncharitable every reason is, and he alone judges of his ignorance or his malice, his innocency or his avoidable deception. We have great reason to be confident as to our own part of the question; but it were also well if our knowledge would make us thankful to God, and humble in ourselves, and charitable to our brother. It is pride that makes contention, but humility is the way of peace and truth.

‘Αγιος ἰσχυρος’

FINIS.

